

Effect of Perceptions of Professional Image on the Profession Preferences of
Nursing Students: A Multi-Centered Study

*Efecto de las percepciones de la imagen profesional sobre las preferencias profesionales de
los estudiantes de enfermería: Un estudio multicéntrico*

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Abstract

Stepping into the nursing profession, staying in the profession and career development in the profession are stated to be the result of perceptions of nurses about the image of the profession. The study aims to determine the effect of perceptions of the professional image of nursing students on their profession preferences. The descriptive study was conducted in nursing departments of six universities in Turkey and Cyprus. The sample consisted of 874 freshman students who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. The data were collected using the introductory information form and the "Image of Nursing Profession Scale". The average score of the nursing students on the Image of Nursing Profession Scale was 152.2 ± 11.4 . A statistically significant difference was found in the Image of Nursing Profession Scale total score average in terms of the gender, undergraduate program, choosing the nursing profession willingly, consideration the image of the profession when choosing the nursing profession variables ($p < .05$). The nursing students were found to have a good level of perceptions of professional image towards the nursing profession. Individual characteristics and the economic situation of the profession were found to positively affect the voluntary choice of the nursing profession.

Keywords: Nursing; baccalaureate; education; students; professional.

Resumen

Se afirma que el ingreso a la profesión de enfermería, la permanencia en la profesión y el desarrollo profesional en la profesión son el resultado de las percepciones de las enfermeras sobre la imagen de la profesión. El estudio tiene como objetivo determinar el efecto de las percepciones de la imagen profesional de los estudiantes de enfermería sobre sus preferencias profesionales. El estudio descriptivo se realizó en departamentos de enfermería de seis universidades de Turquía y Chipre. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 874 estudiantes de primer año que voluntariamente aceptaron participar en la investigación. Los datos fueron recolectados utilizando el formulario de información introductoria y la "Escala de Imagen de la Profesión de Enfermería". La puntuación media de los estudiantes de enfermería en la Escala de Imagen de la Profesión de Enfermería fue de 152.2 ± 11.4 . Se encontró diferencia estadísticamente significativa en el puntaje total de la Escala



Imagen de la Profesión de Enfermería en cuanto al género, programa de pregrado, elección voluntaria de la profesión de enfermería, considerando la imagen de la profesión al elegir las variables de la profesión de enfermería ($p < .05$). Se encontró que los estudiantes de enfermería tienen un buen nivel de percepción de la imagen profesional hacia la profesión de enfermería. Se encontró que las características individuales y la económica de la profesión envían positivamente la elección voluntaria de la profesión de enfermería.

Palabras clave: Enfermería; bachillerato; educación; estudiantes; profesional.

Introduction

The image of nursing is one of the most important factors that enables the professionalization of nursing, which has 150 years of history in the world (Çınar & Demir, 2009; Dost & Bahçecik, 2015; Özdelikara, Boğa & Çayan, 2015). It is stated that the society's view of the nursing profession affects nurses' perception towards their profession, career choice, self-esteem, job satisfaction and job performance. (Fouda, Sleem, & Mohamed, 2016; Girvin et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2012; Takase et al., 2002; Valizadeh et al., 2014). It is also reported that the perceived nursing image in the society affects the students' choice of nursing profession (Hoeve et al. 2014; Miller & Cummings, 2009). However, it is emphasized that the negative attitudes of families and career counselors towards the nursing image prevent students from choosing the nursing profession (Cabanis, 2011; Fouda et al., 2016; Neilson & McNally, 2013).

Determining the nursing image for nursing students and evaluating their preference for the profession is important for their future professional life, career development, status of continuing or quitting the profession, and communication with patients (Chauke et al., 2015; Çelik et al., 2013; Dost & Bahçecik, 2015; Johnson et al., 2012). In Turkey, it was observed that nursing students prefer the profession unintentionally and do not have adequate knowledge about nursing (Elibol & Seren 2017; Saritaş et al., 2014; Sabancıoğulları & Doğan, 2011; Şirin et al., 2008; Tunç et al., 2010).

The main reason for this reluctance is stated to be the negative nursing image in the society (Girvin et al., 2016; Maymoun & Sohail, 2020; Özkan et al., 2017). The results of the study are not generalizable to the whole community due to the fact that the studies conducted to determine the



perceived professional image of nursing students are usually single-centered studies with small samples (Özkan et al., 2017; Temel et al., 2018).

This research was planned as a multi-center study to determine the effect of perceptions of the nursing profession image on nursing students' preference for the profession.

Method

Study Design, Sample and Settings

This study uses the descriptive multi-centered research design. The study population consisted of 991 freshman baccalaureate students enrolled in the Faculty of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences and School of Health Nursing Department of two private and four state universities in Turkey and Cyprus in the fall semester of the 2018-2019 academic year. Of the study population, 88.1% was reached. Without any sample selection, 874 freshman nursing students of faculty of nursing, faculty of health science nursing department and school of health nursing department students who volunteered to participate in the research were included in the study.

Data Collection Tools

A two-part questionnaire was used as the data collection tool.

a) Introductory Information Form: The form, prepared by the researchers in accordance with the literature, contains 16 closed-ended questions to investigate the socio-demographic characteristics of the students and their views on the nursing profession (Dost & Bahçecik, 2015; Glerean et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2015).

b) Image of Nursing Profession Scale: The scale, developed by Dost and Bahçecik (2015), consists of six sub-scales and 42 items. The Likert-type scale has 11 items in the professional qualifications sub-scale, 10 items in the working conditions sub-scale, 8 items in the gender sub-scale, 5 items in the education sub-scale, 5 items in the professional status sub-scale, and 3 items in the external image sub-scale. The scale is scored by "Strongly agree: 5 points", "Agree: 4 points", "Neutral: 3 points", "Disagree: 2 points", "Strongly disagree: 1 point". Negative items in the scale include the items numbered 8, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29 and 31. Responses of negative items on the scale were reverse coded. The scores on the scale range from 42 to 210. As the score from the scale increases, nurses' perceptions of their professional image also increase positively. The Cronbach's Alpha value of the scale was 0.885 (Dost & Bahçecik, 2015).



Data Collection

The study data were collected on September 24-28, 2018, the first week of the academic year. In order to determine the intelligibility and usability of the prepared questionnaire, a pilot study was applied to 100 students, which is 10% of the target sample size. It was determined that the statements in the questionnaire were understandable and therefore no modification was necessary. The questionnaire and the scale were applied to students in a classroom setting using the face-to-face interview technique. Filling the questionnaires lasted 15-20 minutes on average.

Data Analysis

SPSS 25.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA), a statistical package program used in social sciences, was used for the analysis of the study data. Number, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used for the data representation. Suitability of the data for the normal distribution was tested by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The data with normal distribution were tested by independent samples t-test for two groups and one-way analysis of variance. For the results, $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Ethical Consideration

In order to collect study data, approval of the Ethics Committee of the Nursing Faculty of a university (05-03/118-2018), written consents of the nursing students and permissions from the studied universities were obtained.

Results

Characteristics of the Nursing Students

The average age of the nursing students included in the study was 19.09 ± 1.87 years, and 77.3% was female. Of the students, 73.3% ($n=641$) was studying at a state university, 26.7% ($n=233$) was studying at a private university, 48.0% ($n=420$) was at the Faculty of Nursing, 42.6% ($n=372$) was at the Faculty of Health Sciences, and 9.4% ($n=82$) was at the School of Health. Looking at the cities of the students, where they received education, 30.2% ($n=264$) was studying at Izmir-Turkey, 21.5% ($n=188$) was at Manisa-Turkey, 17.8% ($n=156$) was Nicosia-Cyprus, 12.2% ($n=107$) was at Afyonkarahisar-Turkey, 9.4% ($n=82$) was Adiyaman-Turkey, and 8.8% ($n=77$) was at Istanbul-Turkey.



Nursing Students Perceptions of the Nursing Profession Image

The factors about the nursing students' perceptions of the nursing profession image, 21.2% (n=185) had a healthcare professional in the family, and 19.8% (n=173) had a nurse in the family. Of the students 75.4% (n=659) was found to choose the nursing department willingly, and 52.0% (n=454) chose it in the first place, according to the university entrance exam results. The students, 64.7% (n=565) preferred the nursing profession because of the possibility of finding a job. Of the students, 85.5% (n=747) was glad to choose the nursing profession. The students, 31.0% (n=271) were hospitalized before beginning nursing education, while 30.8% (n=269) received nursing care before beginning nursing education. Of the students, 79.5% (n=695) was found to consider the image of the profession while choosing the nursing department. The distribution of the nursing students according to their socio-demographic characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of nursing students according to their socio-demographic characteristics.

Sociodemographic Characteristics	Mean ± SD	Min. - Max.
Age	19,09±1,87	17 - 50
	(n)	(%)
Gender		
Female	676	77,3
Male	198	22,7
High School Graduation		
Anatolian High School	555	63,5
Health Vocational High School	108	12,4
Vocational High School	46	5,2
Other	165	18,9
The University Studying		
State	641	73,3
Private	233	26,7
Undergraduate Programs		
Faculty of Nursing	420	48,0
Faculty of Health Sciences Nursing Department	372	42,6
School of Health Sciences Nursing Department	82	9,4



Sociodemographic Characteristics	Mean ± SD	Min. - Max.
Cities		
İzmir (Turkey)	264	30,2
Manisa(Turkey)	188	21,5
Nicosia (Cyprus)	156	17,8
Afyonkarahisar(Turkey)	107	12,2
Adiyaman(Turkey)	82	9,4
İstanbul (Turkey)	77	8,8
Health Employee in the Family		
Yes	185	21,2
No	689	78,8
Nurse in the Family		
Yes	173	19,8
No	701	80,2
Order of Choosing Nursing Department in Student Selection and Placement Center (ÖSYM) Preferences		
1. Preference	454	52,0
2. Preference	84	9,6
3. Preference	38	4,3
4. Preference	44	5,0
5. Preference	46	5,3
6. and Lower Preference	208	23,8
Choosing Nursing Department Willingly		
Yes	659	75,4
No	215	24,6
Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession		
Possibility of Finding a Job	565	64,7
Good Economic Aspect	46	5,3
Good Social Status	79	9,0
Family Request	56	6,4
Incorrect Preferences	21	2,4
Other	107	12,2



Sociodemographic Characteristics	Mean ± SD	Min. - Max.
Satisfaction of Being in Nursing Profession		
I am satisfied	747	85,5
I am not satisfied	127	14,5
Hospitalization Before Starting Nursing Education		
Yes	271	31,0
No	603	69,0
Getting Nursing Care Before Starting Nursing Education		
Yes	269	30,8
No	605	69,2
Thinking Image of the Profession While Preferring Nursing		
Yes	695	79,5
No	179	20,5
TOTAL	874	100,0

The Image of Nursing Profession Scale Scores

The average score of the nursing students on the Image of Nursing Profession Scale was found 152.2 ± 11.4 points. When the sub-scales of the scale were examined, their scores were 46.2 ± 4.1 points in the professional qualifications sub-scale, 28.0 ± 3.4 points in the working conditions sub-scale, 27.7 ± 4.3 points in the gender sub-scale, 19.9 ± 2.1 points in the education sub-scale, 18.3 ± 4.1 points in the professional status sub-scale, and 11.9 ± 2.7 points in the external image sub-scale. The distributions of the nursing profession image scale score and the sub-scale score averages were presented in Table 2.

There was no statistically significant difference between the average scores in the Image of Nursing Profession Scale in terms of the high schools, where the students have been graduated from, the universities they studied at, presence of a healthcare professional or nurse in the family, the rank of choosing the nursing department in the university entrance exam results, the status of previous hospitalization, and the status of receiving nursing care before ($p > .05$).

Table 2. Distribution of the nursing profession image scale score and the sub-scale score averages

Scale Items and Average Points	I never agree		I do not agree		I am undecided		I agree		I totally agree	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Professional Status (mean±sd. 46.2±4.1; min.27-max.52)										
1. Nursing is an indispensable profession for person and community health.	3	0,3	5	0,6	27	3,1	258	29,5	581	66,5
2. Nurses are an indispensable member of the healthcare team.	-	-	4	0,5	14	1,6	220	25,1	636	72,8
3. Nursing is a science-based profession.	-	-	10	1,1	61	7,0	315	36,0	488	55,9
4. Nurses is a profession based on skill.	4	0,5	11	1,3	49	5,5	256	29,3	554	63,4
Nursing is a profession that requires creativity.	11	1,3	60	6,8	182	20,8	302	34,6	319	36,5
6. Nursing is a profession that requires multi-directional communication.	2	0,2	7	0,8	18	2,1	221	25,3	626	71,6
7. Nursing is a profession that requires dedication.	3	0,3	1	0,1	18	2,1	225	25,7	627	71,8
8. Nursing is a profession that requires patience.	5	0,6	1	0,1	11	1,3	134	15,3	723	82,7
9. Nurses are healthcare professionals who spend the most time with patients.	3	0,3	10	1,1	38	4,4	184	21,1	639	73,1
10. Nurses are the patients' mentors / counselors.	5	0,6	16	1,8	46	5,3	280	32,0	527	60,3
11. Nurses are aware of their social responsibilities.	11	1,3	28	3,2	125	14,3	287	32,8	423	48,4
Working Conditions (mean±sd. 28.0 ±3.4; min.19-max.40)										
12. Nurses' job opportunities are high.	5	0,6	11	1,3	84	9,6	417	47,7	357	40,8
13. The working areas of the nurses are very wide. (Hospital, school, workplace, etc.)	7	0,8	15	1,7	64	7,3	337	38,6	451	51,6
14. The workload of nurses is high.	1	0,1	6	0,7	48	5,5	218	24,9	601	68,8
15. Job description of nursing has not been determined sufficiently.	41	4,7	151	17,3	244	27,9	234	26,8	204	23,3
16. Nursing requires the use of technology.	4	0,5	26	3,0	166	19,0	347	39,7	331	37,8
17. Nurses' wages are low.	10	1,1	68	7,8	212	24,3	238	27,2	346	39,6
18. Working conditions of nurses are heavy.	3	0,3	10	1,1	95	11,0	246	28,1	520	59,5
19. Nursing is a profession that requires teamwork.	4	0,5	16	1,8	47	5,4	252	28,8	555	63,5
20. Nurses are working more hours.	2	0,2	16	1,8	94	10,8	243	27,8	519	59,4
21. Nursing is a profession with a high risk of exposure to violence.	12	1,4	29	3,3	97	11,1	278	31,8	458	52,4
Gender (mean±sd. 27.7 ±4.3; min.12-max.40)										
22. Nursing is a profession associated with the caring and healing role of women.	69	8,0	71	8,1	112	12,8	272	31,1	350	40,0
23. The fact that nurses are women affects the	191	21,8	158	18,1	177	20,3	179	20,5	169	19,3



independence of the nursing profession negatively.

24. Only women should be in the nursing profession.	552	63,2	231	26,4	54	6,2	12	1,4	25	2,8
25. Only men should be in the nursing profession.	594	68,0	205	23,4	36	4,1	18	2,1	21	2,4

Scale Items and Average Points	I never agree		I do not agree		I am undecided		I agree		I totally agree	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
26. Men do the nursing profession better than women.	476	54,5	213	24,4	113	12,9	36	4,1	36	4,1
27. With the participation of male members in nursing profession, negative perceptions about nursing are reduced.	99	11,3	76	8,7	171	19,6	315	36,0	213	24,4
28. Having men in nursing profession makes it easier for nurses to defend their legal rights better.	163	18,6	152	17,4	219	25,1	190	21,7	150	17,2
29. Having men in nursing profession increases the social status of nursing.	189	21,6	126	14,4	174	19,9	208	23,8	177	20,3
Education (mean±sd. 19.9±2.1; min.11-max.25)										
30. Nursing requires university-level education.	7	0,8	17	1,9	40	4,6	172	19,7	638	73,0
31. Differences between education levels of nurses affect nursing negatively.	24	2,7	40	4,6	150	17,2	256	29,3	404	46,2
32. Nursing requires scientific education.	4	0,5	7	0,8	59	6,7	256	29,3	548	62,7
33. Nursing requires continuing education.	5	0,6	18	2,1	104	11,9	267	30,5	480	54,9
34. Nurses work based on scientific knowledge for the health of patients.	3	0,3	11	1,3	65	7,4	261	29,9	534	61,1
Professional Status (mean±sd. 18.3±4.1; min.5-max.25)										
35. Nursing is a profession well known / known in the society.	13	1,5	58	6,6	104	12,0	260	29,7	439	50,2
36. Nursing is a respected profession in the society.	41	4,7	106	12,1	243	27,8	257	29,4	227	26,0
37. Nursing is a profession that is appreciated by the society.	24	2,7	99	11,3	231	26,4	288	33,0	232	26,6
38. Nursing is a profession that is respected by those belonging to other health professions.	31	3,5	100	11,4	259	29,7	287	32,9	197	22,5
39. Nursing has prestige equivalent to other healthcare professions.	63	7,2	182	20,8	273	31,2	199	22,8	157	18,0
External Appearance (mean±sd. 11.9±2.7 min.3-max.15)										
40. Nurses are polite, kind people are.	20	2,3	50	5,7	198	22,6	288	33,0	318	36,4
41. Nurses are good-humored people.	23	2,6	54	6,2	211	24,2	267	30,5	319	36,5
42. Nurses are well-maintained people.	21	2,4	38	4,3	172	19,7	286	32,7	357	40,9
Scale for the Image of Nursing Profession (mean±sd.152.2 ± 11.4; min.97-max.182)										

The Image of Nursing Profession Scale score averages were found to be higher in female students than male students, in nursing students who study in the Faculty of Health Sciences than the students who study in the Faculty of Nursing and the School of Health, in students who choose the nursing department willingly than the students who choose the nursing department unintentionally, in students who are satisfied to be in the nursing profession than the students who are not satisfied, in students who chose the nursing profession due to its better social status than the students with other reasons, with a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$). Table 3 shows the comparison between the nursing profession image scale score averages, socio-demographic characteristics and perceived nursing image factors.

Table 3. Comparison between the nursing profession image scale score averages, socio-demographic characteristics and perceived nursing image factors

Socio-demographic Characteristics	Scale Total Score Mean \pm SD	Statistical Value
Gender		
Female	153,0 \pm 10,8	t=3,877
Male	149,5 \pm 13,0	p<0,001
Undergraduate Programs		
Faculty of Nursing	150,9 \pm 12,2	F=6,883 p=0,001
Faculty of Health	153,9 \pm 10,3	
School of Health Sciences	151,2 \pm 11,6	
Choosing Nursing Department Willingly		
Yes	154,6 \pm 10,0	t=11,729
No	144,8 \pm 12,5	p<0,001
Satisfaction of Being in Nursing Profession		
I am satisfied	153,9 \pm 10,3	t=10,969
I am not satisfied	142,5 \pm 13,0	p<0,001



Socio-demographic Characteristics	Scale Total Score Mean ± SD	Statistical Value
Thinking Image of the Profession While Preferring Nursing		
Yes	153,5 ± 10,6	t=6,883
No	147,4 ± 13,1	p<0,001
Reason for Choosing Nursing Profession		
Possibility of Finding a Job	157,0 ± 9,4	
Good Economic Aspect	152,4 ± 11,3	
Good Social Status	150,2 ± 11,2	F=13,748
Family Request	145,8 ± 12,2	p<0,001
Incorrect Preferences	139,2 ± 12,8	
Other	154,5 ± 9,9	

Discussion

As a result of the study, the nursing students were found to have a good level of perceptions of professional image towards the nursing profession. In the small number of studies on the subject in Turkey, students' perceptions towards the image of nursing profession were found to be moderate (Özkan et al., 2017) and good level (Dost & Bahçecik, 2015; Özdelikara et al., 2015), and they were found to perceive the nursing profession positively (Özakgöl et al., 2017; Temel et al. 2018).

There was no statistically significant difference between the status of having a healthcare professional or nurses in the families of the students and the nursing profession image scale score averages. Studies have shown that having a healthcare professional or a nurse in students' families does not have an impact on the image of nursing, but leads to positive views on general professional qualifications (Abbas et al., 2020; Özkan et al., 2017; Temel et al., 2018). The study findings are parallel with similar studies conducted in Turkey.

In the study, the major reason for preferring the nursing profession was the ease of finding a job, as expressed by the students. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the image scale score averages of the students who preferred the profession because of the possibility of finding a job and the students who did not. In the studies, the students were found to



choose the nursing profession mostly due to the higher employment opportunity, and a significant relationship was found between the professional image score averages (Glerean et al., 2017; Degazon et al., 2015). In the study of Law and Arthur (2003), the majority of students stated that they chose nursing due to the interest towards the profession. In the study by Özkan et al. (2017), 37.5% of the students were found to strongly agree with the statement "Nurses have more career opportunities". In the study, it was found that the students who chose the nursing profession because of its good social status had higher overall score averages on the image scale for the nursing profession, and that the difference was statistically significant. In addition, it was found that students who considered the image of the profession while choosing nursing had higher overall score averages on the image of the nursing profession scale than other students, and that the difference was statistically significant. In the majority of the studies on the subject, it is observed that the students prefer the nursing profession due to the higher opportunity of finding a job (Glerean et al., 2017; Glerean et al., 2019; Özkan et al., 2017). Therefore, it is believed that young people take this issue into consideration when choosing the profession and make their profession choices based on concerns about employment (Elmorshedy et al., 2020; Glerean et al., 2019; Liaw et al., 2016).

In the study, it was found that the students received the highest score from the 'professional qualification' sub-scale. Most of the students were found to agree to the expression 'Nursing is a profession that requires patience' in this sub-scale. The majority of nursing students have stated that patience is a characteristic that nurses should have (Özkan et al., 2017). Studies show that nursing students have a positive attitude towards the professional qualifications and the perceived image of the profession (Glerean et al., 2019; Elibol & Seren, 2017; Özakgöl et al., 2017). The results of our study are in line with the literature.

When the 'working conditions', sub-scale was examined, it was found that the majority of students agree the statements "Nurses' workload is high", "Nurses have more career opportunities", and "Nurses have heavy working conditions". In the study by Özkan et al. (2017), more than half of the students were found to strongly agree with the statement "Nurses have heavy working conditions", and a few of the students were found to strongly agree with the statement "Nurses have more career opportunities". In their study, Kiwanuka (2010) found this rate as 78%. Although it is known that the nursing profession has heavy working conditions, it is among the preferred



professions due to more opportunities to find a job (Abbas et al., 2020; Glerean et al. 2019; Wu et al., 2015).

In the study, when the 'gender' sub-scale was examined, the students' agreement rate for the statements 'Only women should be in the nursing profession' and 'Only men should be in the nursing profession' was found to be very low. The society's perspective on the nursing profession is changing with the increase in the number of male nurses in recent years. It can be stated that the professional sexist approach is gradually diminishing in societies, which has a patriarchal cultural structure (Abbas et al., 2020; Girvin et al., 2016).

The World Health Organization (2009) and the Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey (2007) assert that only those who have four years of undergraduate education should be granted the right to receive a nurse's title. In the study, when the education sub-scale of the Image of Nursing Profession Scale was examined, the majority of students were found to agree with the expression "Nursing requires university-level education". In line with these results, it can be stated that nursing students base their professional knowledge and skills on a scientific basis.

When we look at the "professional status" sub-scale in the study, it was found that the majority of students agreed the expressions 'Nursing is a well-known/recognized profession in the society', 'Nursing is a respected profession in the society', and 'Nursing is a profession appreciated by the society'. In the literature, nursing students have reported a lack of appreciation and respect towards the nursing profession (Abbas et al., 2020; Chauke et al., 2015; Elmorshedy et al., 2020). It can be stated that nursing students are influenced by society's perception of nursing.

Limitations of the study

The study was restricted to nursing students of six universities. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all nursing students. The application of the study to a larger number of nursing students with the same questionnaire may yield different results.

Conclusion

As a result, the nursing students were found to have a good level of perceptions of professional image towards the nursing profession. Female students, the students who chose the nursing department willingly, students who were glad to be in the nursing profession, who considered the social status of the profession while choosing the nursing profession, and the



students who preferred the profession due to its better social status were found to have higher average scores in the Image of Nursing Profession Scale compared to other students.

Individual characteristics and the economic situation of the profession positively affect the voluntary choice of the nursing profession. It is believed that giving educators the chance to take the right initiatives at the necessary and the right time during the educational period and revealing the relationship between profession preference and attitudes towards the profession will increase students' positive attitudes towards their profession and thus will allow educating qualified nurses.

Implication for nursing and health policy

Shortage for healthcare professionals is increasing rapidly all over the world. The number of nurses is insufficient to provide adequate and quality care. The results of this study, which investigated the effect of perceptions of professional image on the profession preferences of nursing students, will shed a light to further studies on the factors affecting the choice of profession. The results of this multi-centered study, which was conducted in six different universities, are believed to contribute positively to the planning to be carried out to improve the image of the nursing profession.

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