

Levels of Self Awareness and Self Evaluation in Nursing and Midwifery Students and Its Relationship With Academic Success

Hemřirelik ve Ebelik Bölümü Öğrencilerin Benlik Bilinci ve Kendini Deđerlendirme Düzeylerinin Akademik Başarı ile İliřkisi

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine whether or not there is a relationship between levels of self awareness, self evaluation and academic achievement in nursing and midwife students over the four years of thier training. The Self Awareness Scale (SAS) and Self Evaluation Scale (SES) were used for the study. The sample consisted of nursing (n=32) and midwifery (n=36) students at Ankara University Cebeci School of Health. In this cohort study, the scales were applied eight times over four years. An increase in scores was observed on both scales over the four years. A significant relationship was found between academic success and the SAS scores of third and fourth year nursing students. However, no such relationship was found in the case of midwifery students. A significant relationship was found for these students between academic succes and the SES scores in the second, third and fourth classes. In general, midwifery students enter university with lower entrance scores than nursing students. It is thus possible that their professional misgivings are greater than those of nursing students. As a result, it is possible to say that the self awareness of higher education students is affected positively.

Keywords: self awareness, self evaluation, academic achievement, nursing and midwife students

Öz

Çalışmanın amacı, dört yıl boyunca ebelik ve hemřirelik öğrencilerinin benlik bilinci, kendini deđerlendirme ve akademik başarıları arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığını incelemektir. Çalışmada "Benlik Bilinci Ölçeđi" ve "Kendini Deđerlendirme Ölçeđi" kullanılmıştır. Çalışmaya Ankara Üniversitesi Cebeci Sağlık Yüksekokulu'nda öğrenim gören 32 hemřirelik ve 36 ebelik öğrencisi alınmıştır. Ölçekler dört yıl boyunca sekiz kez uygulanmıştır. Dört yıl boyunca her iki ölçekte puanların arttığı gözlenmiştir. Üçüncü ve dördüncü yıl, hemřirelik öğrencilerinin Benlik Bilinci Ölçeđi puanları ve akademik başarıları arasında anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmuştur. Ancak ebelik öğrencilerinde anlamlı fark bulunamamıştır. Ebelik öğrencilerinin ikinci, üçüncü ve dördüncü sınıflarında kendini deđerlendirme ve akademik başarı arasında anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmuştur. Genel olarak ebelik bölümü öğrencilerinin giriş puanlarının, hemřirelik bölümü öğrencilerine göre düşük olduğu görülmüştür. Bu sonuca bakarak, ebelik öğrencilerinin hemřirelik öğrencilerine göre mesleki ilgilerinin daha az olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre, yükseköğretimin öğrencilerin benlik bilincini olumlu yönde etkilediđi söylenebilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: benlik bilinci, kendini deđerlendirme, akademik başarı, hemřirelik, ebelik.

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Introduction

Nursing and midwife training is a planned process aimed at achieving changes of behaviour in students regarding their profession. This interaction has an important effect on the students' level of self awareness and self evaluation. Over the past 20 years, the number of studies investigating the relationship between success in education and learning and the concepts of self has increased (Kobal and Musek, 2001). As a result of the experience, students learn how to enter into interaction using their own thoughts and feelings, become aware of their own real feelings, and how events around them affect them. An individual's behaviour is formed both by hereditary and by the environment. An educational environment achieves required changes in behaviours in the areas of how one should behave and think. If an individual can interact with his own feelings and thoughts, if they know themselves, they will also be able to know others. Each person is born with a biological entity, distinguishes himself from others through a process of socialisation and so develops a sense of "me". According to Coopersmith the concept of self is a structure developed on the foundations of an individual's interests, skills and goals (Kenç & Oktay, 2002). The academic concept of self is the judgement of how skilled one is relative to other students resulting from a specific academic effort.

Everyone who seeks to understand and explain the reasons for human behaviour needs to understand the concept of self. This is because an individual's perceptions of himself influence his behaviour, feelings and thoughts (Yörüköğlü, 1982). Awareness of self within a social lifestyle may arise through communication. William James, in his work "The principles of psychology 1952/1891" investigates two dimensions of self which he calls the known and unknown self. Scientifically, we study the known self. The subjective aspect of the concept of self is not observable by others. The objective qualities which can be observed by others form the subject matter of psychology. The individual does not simply express himself through the process of social interaction. At the same time he is concerned with what others are thinking about him and arranges his behaviour in the light of the feelings and thoughts of others. Some people are unsuccessful because even though they are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to address the situations they are faced with, they evaluate themselves negatively, or, in other words, have a low level of self awareness. A person who perceives themselves in a positive way, feels their own worth despite their mistakes, accepts responsibility for their own actions and is successful in interpersonal relationships. A person who knows themselves can, through this knowledge, change their negative characteristics has a positive level of self awareness and uses effective teaching methods. (Yalçın, 1999).

Students in the nursing and midwife department as young people attending universities face a number of problems. Youth is according to some experts a period of transition and according to others a stage between childhood and adulthood. The ability of a young person to contribute to the community in this period of development depends on their gaining knowledge, skills and experience (Yorukoğlü, 1989).

The education programs at Schools of Health are of a quality to equip the student with the knowledge and skills they need from the first year until graduation. They aim to develop students' levels of self awareness throughout a socialisation process and enable them to be more successful. A number of differing studies show that young people going through this process have questions about their personalities and physical development which go unanswered, that they find it difficult to solve their problems (Yalçın 1994). The main problems faced by students can be summarised as: economic needs, communication problems within the family, learning problems, accommodation problems, missing their families, dependence on friends and relatives, problems in communicating with friends and worries about the future.

This desire to find solutions to problems and the effort involved causes stress in students. The feeling and thought of being inadequate in problem solving affects a student's self awareness negatively. A person's way of self perception can affect their thoughts and feelings and lead to certain psychological problems. The feeling and thought of being unable to overcome obstacles affects students self awareness negatively and leads to a lack of success and of fitting in (Yalçın, 1994). The degree to which an individual fits in is explained through their own positive self evaluation and success.

Studies have been carried out into the relationship between the attitudes of mothers and fathers and self respect. In a study by Yılmaz (2001) it was found that when compatibility between spouses was high and interaction between mother father and child was healthy, children's evaluations of themselves were positive. Onur (1958) in a study investigating the relationship between parental attitudes and self respect, found a high and positive correlation between an accepting parental attitude and a child's self-confidence. In another study of 325 university students using Coopersmith's Self Respect Scale, it was found that parental education was important in the development of individuals' self respect.

While the individual first takes the mother and the father as models in the lifelong process of socialisation, later on they interact with close friends and other individuals in their close environment. During puberty young people share their thoughts and feelings with their friends and thus broaden communication outside the family's authority (as cited in Ersanlı, 1996). Whether or not this interaction is healthy affects the individual's positive self evaluation and academic success. A person who perceives themselves as good and easy to get on with displays behaviour in accordance with these characteristics (Kılıçlı, 1992). A student who perceives themselves as hardworking will set aside a large amount of time for study and consistently keeping up with their work maintains an instinct for success and, with all probability, will be successful (Baymur, 1994). In another study carried out on more than 70 students (Reddy, 1978), a positive relationship was found between students' interest in school and their concept of self (as cited in Ersanlı, 1996).

Various studies done on the subject show that educational activities, interaction in the school, interest felt in lessons and the drive for success are the important factors affecting awareness of self. The quality of the communication that teachers have with students affects their self respect (Pişkin, 1999). Many studies have shown that there is a direct relationship between students self-respect and success (Çuhadaroğlu 1985, Karadağlı 1991, Sobol 1978).

Yeğner and Mieziro (1980), in a study carried out on 28 pre-pubescent students, investigated the relationship between classroom interaction and the concept of self, and found that students with a low concept of self faced greater learning difficulties. Doğusal-Tezel (1987) carried out a study of 47 male and 63 female 5th grade children and found that those students who evaluated themselves positively were successful while those who perceived themselves negatively were not. From the point of view of the gender variable, no significant difference was found between the success rates of girls and boys.

Self awareness is an individual's tendency to pay attention to his or her emotions, attitudes and behavior in response to specific situations (Benbassat and Baumal, 2005). Individuals show the individual differences between their levels of self awareness in their studies. A variety of studies have shown that there is a relationship between students self perceptions and their success. As students who have a positive level of self awareness are more successful, efforts to improve levels of self awareness increase the effectiveness of education.

We have not found a study which follows self awareness and self evaluation in nursing and midwifery training throughout higher education. However, there are cross-sectional studies in the literature which measure self respect.

Aim of the study

This study was conducted to identify whether or not there is a relationship between the level of self awareness, self evaluation and academic success in the students of the nursing and midwifery department of the School of Health over the four years of their education.

The sub problems specified in the study are:

- Is there a significant difference between the the level of self awarenesss and self evalutaion in the students of the nursing and midwifery department at the School of Health?
- Is there any positive increase in the levels of self awareness and self evaluation between the first year and graduation in the students of the nursing and midwifery department at the School of Health?
- Is there any relationship between levels of self awareness and self evaluation and academic success in the students of the nursing and midwifery department at the School of Health between the first year and graduation?

Methods

No sample was taken from the students participating in the study. All students were included. Students exluded from the study were those who had postponed their courses, left the School or failed to graduate. All measures used in the study were, over the four years, administered as a pre and post test each year, making eight applications in all. The pre test was imlemented in the first lesson of the first day of the year and the post test in the last lesson of the year. Each test took 15 minutes. The study is a prospective cohort study carried out through following for four years students who registered in 1998 and 1999 at the Ankara University Cebeci School of Health, midwifery and nursing department. Education and teaching began in 1998 at the School. The study also encompassed students who studied from 1998-2000 (Nursing= 17, Midwifery= 13) and 1999-2001 (Nursing= 15, Midwifery= 23). The study was conducted in only one School. For this reason, generalisations can not be made. Even if the number of students in the study seems small, all students, without sampling, were included in the study. The study was approved by the school administration and consent obtained. The participants in the study were provided with a verbal explanation of the study. They were told that their participation was volutary and their verbal consent was obtained.

The school began teaching in a separate building apart from the university campus. The nursing and midwifery course is four years. For the first two years all nursing and midwifery students follow the same curriculum in the same classes. In the third and fourth year, midwifery students take their own courses in their own departments. There are eight terms in the four years. All students in the School benefit from psuchological counselling services.

Data collection and analysis

In this study data were collected through Personal Information Forms, the Self Awareness Scale (SAS) and the Self Evaluation Scale (SES).

Personal Information Form(PIF): the study used an 11 item questionnaire to identify the students' demographic charactersitics. Questions asked about age, previous schools, family income, the educational level of parents and their professions, university entrance exam result, number of siblings, whether or not a scholarship had been awarded, and annual marks on the course.

Self Awareness Scale (SAS): This scale was developed by Doğan Cüceloğlu. The scale's validity and reliability were assessed, with the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient being 0.99. The

measure allows an individual to look closely at their own level of self awareness and to what extent they are involved in good relationships through a thirty item five choice Likert type scale (0 if the statement is untrue, 1 if the statement is true rarely, 2 if it is partially true, 3 if it is mainly true, 4 if it is completely true). If the individual gets 96 point or above on the scale it indicates that they have an exaggerated idea of themselves. Between 82 and 95 indicates they like themselves and are at peace with themselves, 48-81 indicates they have mixed feelings about themselves, 48 and below indicate they do not like themselves.

Self Evaluation Scale (SES): The validation and reliability studies for this measure were undertaken by Necla Öner and Ayhan Le Compte, with an Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of 0.99 emerging. This is a 20 item Likert scale allowing the individual to express his feelings through four choices. (1 rarely, 2 sometimes, 3 generally, 4 always). The highest score is 80 and the lowest 20. The ideal is between 44-48. A low score indicates a low anxiety while a high score indicates a high anxiety about themselves.

The data acquired in the study was evaluated through the Mann-Whitney U, Wilcoxon's simple correlations and percentages is SPSS.

Results

The demographic characteristics of the students taking part in the study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Characteristics of Participants

Characteristics	N(%)
Age	
• Below 18	6(8.8)
• 18-20	50(73.5)
• Above 20	12(17.7)
Previous school	
• High school	52(76.5)
• Health High school	16(23.5)
Number of siblings	
• None	8(11.8)
• 1	19(27.9)
• 2 or above	41(60.3)
Mother's educational level	
• Illiterate	5(7.4)
• Primary school	23(33.8)
• Middle/high school	37(54.4)
• University	3(4.4)
Father's educational level	
• Illiterate	1(1.5)
• Primary school	15(22.1)
• Middle/high school	43(63.2)
• University	9(13.2)
Income level	
• Low	34(50.0)
• Medium	31(45.6)
• High	3(4.4)
Accommodation	
• Own house	47(69.1)
• Student hostel	21(30.9)

The average age of the students was 19.05 (SD \pm 1.7). When we look at the average grades of the students in each class at the end of each year, the first year average of the nursing department was 83.6 (ss \pm 6.4), the second year 82.9 (ss \pm 7.8), the third year 84.0 (ss \pm 9.2) and the fourth year 91.7 (ss \pm 5.8). The first year average for the midwifery department was 80.8 (ss \pm 6.1), the second year 81.2 (ss \pm 7.6), the third year 83.6 (ss \pm 9.7) and the fourth year 92.5 (ss \pm 8.2). The average grades in the nursing department were higher than those in the midwifery department.

The final SAS scores of the students in the nursing department according to year were for the first year 91.5 (ss \pm 6.8), second year 92.5 (ss \pm 6.6), third year 93.6 (ss \pm 6.6) and fourth year 93.4 (ss \pm 6.3). The final SAS scores of the students in the midwifery department according to year were for the first year 87.5 (ss \pm 7.4), second year 88.3 (ss \pm 7.3), third year 88.9 (ss \pm 7.1) and fourth year 89.7 (ss \pm 7.5). The average scores in the nursing department were higher than those in the midwifery department.

The final SES scores of the students in the nursing department according to year were for the first year 41.25 (ss \pm 5.8), second year 41.1 (ss \pm 5.2), third year 41.1 (ss \pm 4.6) and fourth year 41.6 (ss \pm 4.9). The final SES scores of the students in the midwifery department according to year were for the first year 43.1.5 (ss \pm 7.3), second year 42.7 (ss \pm 6.5), third year 42.3 (ss \pm 6.1) and fourth year 43.0 (ss \pm 6.0). A significant difference was found between the students of the nursing department and midwifery department on the SES.

In every year, the last test scores for the self awareness test of the nursing and midwifery students were compared using the Mann-whitney U test. The results are given in Table 2. The SAS averages for the students in all years of the nursing department are higher than those of the midwifery department ($p < 0.05$). In no years was a significant difference found between nursing and midwifery students on self evaluation score averages.

Table 2.

Results of the Post Test Between Nursing and Midwifery Students Over the Four Years

Year	SAS			SES		
	Average score	u	P	Average score	u	p
First year	40.61	380.500	0.01*	33.98	559.500	0.8
	29.07			34.96		
Second year	41.11	364.500	0.009*	33.88	556.000	0.8
	28.63			35.06		
Third year	41.63	348.000	0.005*	33.94	558.000	0.8
	28.17			35.00		
Fourth year	40.39	387.500	0.02*	33.33	538.000	0.6
	29.26			35.54		

The scores of the SAS and SES pretests and posttests for the students of the nursing department were analysed using the Wilcoxon test. No significant difference was found between the self awareness and self analysis scores of the nursing students ($p > 0.05$). In comparisons of the pre and post test scores, a significant result was found in favour of the post test other than with the fourth year ($p < 0.05$). The first and fourth year post test scores of these students were compared using the Wilcoxon test. A significant difference was found between the self awareness scores ($z: -4.61$, $p < 0.001$) and the self evaluation scores ($z: -2.09$, $p: 0.03$). As the class level of these students increased, so did their self evaluation scores.

SAS and SES pre test and post test scores for the midwifery students were also compared over the four years using the Wilcoxon test. Other than in the first year, no significant difference was found for the self evaluation scores for these students ($P>0.05$). For the first year, the pre test scores were found to be higher and the students were deemed to be more anxious at the time they registered at the school. When the self awareness pre test and post test scores were compared, a significant difference was found in favour of the post test in all years other than the fourth ($p<0.05$). While the difference between the first and fourth year self awareness scores was found significant ($z:-4.44, p<0.001$), the difference in the self evaluation scores was not ($z: -0.35, p:0.7$). As the year level of the midwifery students increased, no development was observed in their self evaluation.

Over the four years the students scores for self awareness and self evaluation were compared with academic success through a simple correlation. The results are given in Table 3. The table shows that in the nursing department there is a positive relationship between self awareness and success in the first and fourth year students. In the midwifery department, a positive relationship was found between the self evaluation scores and success in the second, third and fourth years. No such relationship was found in the students of the nursing department.

Table 3.
Results of Correlation Between SAS and SES scales and Academic Achievement

Class	Nursing (n:32)		Midwifery (n:36)	
	SAS	SES	SAS	SES
First Year	r: .279	r: .09	r: -.071	r: .216
	p: 0.1	p: 0.5	p: 0.6	p: 0.1
Second Year	r: .279	r: -.173	r: -.053	r: .410
	p: 0.9	p: 0.5	p: 0.7	p: 0.01*
Third Year	p: .429	r: -.070	p: -.135	p: .413
	r: 0.01*	p: 0.7	r: 0.4	r: 0.01*
Fourth Year	p: .442	p: -.110	p: .135	p: .348
	r: 0.01*	r: 0.5	r: 0.4	r: 0.03*

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Discussion

When the averages of the self awareness scores of students in the nursing and midwifery department are compared, the level of self awareness is found to be higher for students of nursing than of midwifery in every year. In self evaluation, no difference was found between the departments. With nursing students, a positive increase was seen in self awareness and self evaluation from the first to the fourth year. The reasons that the midwifery students' scores were lower than those of the nursing students may be due to: the fact that the required university entrance scores to get into the department are lower for midwives; personal characteristics; their problem solving skills and the way they see their profession. Their self awareness may also have been negatively affected by the homesickness they feel leaving their families and entering a new environment, difficulties in communication with friends, economic need, accommodation problems, lack of success and a lack of interest in their profession.

However, it was noted that all students' self awareness levels reached a good level in the second and third years and by the fourth were at the required level. At the end of year four the students understood their own behaviour better and were more knowledgeable in noticing the reasons for behaviour.

When we look at the relationship between the level of self awareness and success of the students, a significant relationship is found between the third and fourth year nursing students' levels of self awareness and academic success. These students, who perceive themselves positively, have a high degree of success. Studies by Doğusal-Tezel (1987) and Yavuzer (1989) into the relationship between levels of self awareness and success show that the level does affect success. Marsh (1990 and 1994), Watking & Gutierrez (1990) studied the relationship between the concept of self and academic success over four years with university students and found that the level of self awareness plays a large part in academic competence. Similarly, Arseven (1979), İnanç (1997), Pişkin & Kenç (2000) came to the same results.

Cheung (1986), in a study of the 10-20 age group, emphasizes that there is a positive relationship between students' self respect and academic success. Cheung (1986), in another study on high school students, found that self awareness scores in students with high academic expectations were significantly high. Rosenberg et al. (1989) in a study of 10th grade students and Gaspard and Bernette (1991) in a study of the 14-17 age group found similar results.

The fact that self awareness and success were generally lower in the midwifery students than in the nursing students can be explained through their high anxiety. The reason for the higher level of anxiety in midwifery students may be related to the the lower level of their university entrance requirements and worries about their professional futures. The profession of midwife is not one of the preferred, leading subjects in the university entrance examination. Nursing is a higher preference. Midwifery students state that they chose their subject simply to be able to get into university. This is why the departments entry levels are lower. Students who chose midwifery, from the bottom of the list, have many false preconceptions and prejudices about their profession. This situation may have affected the students. According to data from psychological counselling services, in comparison with the nursing students, their mental reactions are not within normal limits and they are not sensitive in communication. As midwifery students do not have a sufficient level of self respect they have problems in communication. Terakye (1989) and Tufan (1989) show in their work that persons without a high level of self awareness are at risk from psychological symptoms.

Sever and others, in a study of nursing students, found that as self respect increased, negative psychological symptoms decreased. Atik and others (1991) in a study of high school students, found a significant relationship between school success and levels of anxiety. When we look at the problems of midwifery and nursing department students, the midwifery students more clearly stated in interview that they suffered from communication problems in the family, and that their parents had problems. The nursing students, who had a good level of self awareness, also displayed psychological reactions which were more positive. Dinç-Sever et al. (1993) found, in their study, that there was a positive relationship between anxiety, depression and self knowledge. Golin (1977), in a study comparing depressive and non-depressive adolescents, found that depressives were more sensitive to situations likely to reduce self respect. Persons who have low self respect perceive more threats and are more sensitive to criticism (Rosenberg, 1965).

A low level of self awareness during adolescence results later on in the individual not accepting his own self and, consequently to being withdrawn, becoming distanced from social relationships and a lack of self confidence (Garrison ve Garrison, 1975). Another study on adolescents found other characteristics to be associated with self respect – anxiety and

outgoingness (Kawash, 1982). Individuals who have high self awareness can be said to display positive traits such as self confidence, optimism, the will to succeed and perserverence (Yörükoğlu, 1985). However, it is only possible to say that the midwifery students anxiety on achieves the required level in the third and fourth years.

Conclusion

In general, it can be said that the students at the School of Health maintain their self awareness at a medium level and increasingly can control themselves psychologically. Students' ability to know themselves and others in continually increasing. The association between parental communication and positive self awareness has been demonstrated in various studies. Hart (1985) studied the interaction between high school students and their families and found that the children of parents who accepted them and valued them had a high deree of self awareness. Satılmış and Seber (1988) in a study of adolescents in orphanages emphasised the importance of family relationships in the process of socialisation. It has been ascertained that parents' direction of children towards success and development of positive behaviour affects motivation in a positive way (Berber, 1990).

The nursing students generally stated that their families valued them and gave them support. This situation may have led to positive interaction. The importance and rules of active listening in the educational process is a behavioural change that the students are expected to gain. It can be said that students who are accepted by their families, and who have self confidence are also more successful in the implementation of active listening and building empathy in interpersonal relationships.

In looking into the success of the nursing students over the four years, it is possible to say that they reach the required level of success by the end of the fourth year. It also can be said that these students have a more intense interest in their studies and have developed stronger problem solving skills. This result can be attributed to the effect of experience which makes personal relationships more sufficient and meaningful. Tufan (1989) demonstrates in a four year study in a School of Nursing that experience of life increases self respect. A study by Kutlu et al. Shows that students self respect increases as the educational year goes on (Kutlu et al., 1997).

An increase in the midwifery students' problem solving skills was discerned in the final year. So, in general, it can be said that all students developed in the skills of changing behaviour, communication and attitude. This can be attributed both to their student life and to the psychological counselling services.

In this study we have found a significant relationship between success and levels of self awareness, all variables that positively affect the level of self awareness will increase their self confidence and success. As a result we can consider the period of higher education as a factor which positvely affects the students levels of self awareness.

As the period of higher education affects students levels of self awareness positively, it is possible for schools of higher education to plan activities to increase students experience of life and problem solving skills. Methods which lead to higher levels of students participation in class should be used. Positive feedback should be used to encourage the development of self confident behaviours in students and students successes andproblems should be monitored. The responsibilities of students in this area can be summarised as: to be a good listener, to be empathic, to learn about human behaviour, and to develop their ability to know themselves and others.

Self awareness is a characteristic which changes dynamically for various reasons during a person's life. Therefore, to be able to see long term effects needs the planning of further detailed studies. For example, changes in students perceptions of their profession from the start of their studies to graduation or to identify negative personal characteristics and problems through individual and group interviews, or following up developments in professional development and levels of self awareness after graduation.

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