

# Determining Clinical Comfort, Worry and Status of Liking Children among Pediatric Nursing Students: Case of Two Different Universities

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The aim of this study is to determine clinical comfort, worry and status of liking children among pediatric nursing students studying in universities located in east and west of Turkey.

**Methods:** The data of this descriptive and correlational study were collected in nursing faculties located in east (A University) and west (B University) provinces between April-May 2020. The sample of the study consisted of 211 students who participated in the online survey voluntarily between the specified dates. The data of the study were collected using "Sociodemographic Characteristics Form", "Clinical Comfort and Worry Assessment Tool of Pediatric Nursing Students" and "Barnett Liking of Children Scale (BLCS)".

**Results:** In the study, the comfort subscale mean score was higher in the nursing students studying in the University B and the difference was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Although BLCS mean score was higher in the nursing students studying in the University A, the result was not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). It was determined that there was a statistically positive moderate significant correlation between levels of liking children and the comfort subscale and a statistically negative moderate significant correlation between levels of liking children and the worry subscale in nursing students studying in the Universities A and B.

**Conclusions:** It was found that the liking of children status of the students studying in the Universities A and B was high. Students' levels of stress, anxiety and liking children in the pediatric clinic rotation should be determined.

**Keywords:** Child, nursing, pediatric.

## Pediatric Hemşireliği Öğrencilerinin Klinik Rahatlık, Endişe ve Çocuk Sevme Durumlarının Belirlenmesi: İki Farklı Üniversite Örneği

### ÖZET

**Amaç:** Araştırma, Türkiye'de doğu ve batı ilindeki bir üniversitede öğrenim gören pediatri hemşireliği öğrencilerinin klinik rahatlık, endişe ve çocuk sevme durumlarının belirlenmesini amaçlamaktadır.

**Metot:** Tanımlayıcı ve ilişkili arayıcı tipte olan araştırma verileri, doğu (A üniversitesi) ve batı (B üniversitesi) ilinde bulunan bir hemşirelik fakültesinde Nisan-Mayıs 2020 tarihleri arasında toplandı. Araştırmanın örneklemini belirtilen tarihlerde gönüllü olarak online ankete katılan 211 öğrenci oluşturdu. Araştırmanın verileri "Sosyodemografik Özellikler Formu", "Pediatric Hemşireliği Öğrencileri Klinik Rahatlık ve Endişe Değerlendirme Aracı" ve "Barnett Çocuk Sevme Ölçeği (BÇSÖ)" ile toplandı.

**Bulgular:** Araştırmada rahatlık alt boyutu puan ortalaması B üniversitesinde eğitim gören hemşirelik öğrencilerinde daha yüksek olup aradaki fark istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bulundu ( $p < 0.05$ ). BÇSÖ puan ortalaması A üniversitesinde eğitim gören hemşirelik öğrencilerinde daha yüksek olmasına karşın sonuç istatistiksel olarak anlamlı değildi ( $p > 0.05$ ). A ve B üniversitesinde eğitim gören hemşirelik öğrencilerinin çocuk sevme düzeyi ile klinik rahatlık alt boyutu arasında istatistiksel pozitif yönlü, çocuk sevme düzeyi ile ve endişe alt boyutu arasında istatistiksel negatif yönlü, orta derecede anlamlı ilişki saptandı. ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Sonuç:** Araştırmada A ve B üniversitesindeki öğrencilerin çocuk sevme durumlarının yüksek olduğu bulundu. Pediatric hemşireliği dersi uygulama rotasyonunda öğrencilerin stres, kaygı ve çocukları sevme düzeyleri belirlenmelidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çocuk, hemşirelik, pediatri.

**N**ursing education is an educational process in which clinical practice and theoretical knowledge are carried out together and complement each other. The main purpose of nursing education is to bring students basic knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes in professionally cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. As in all education programs of all disciplines based on practice, theoretical knowledge and clinical experience is very important for nursing. In this education system, students reflect the theoretical knowledge they received throughout their education life as a skill in the clinical field, he/she also experience new knowledge, skills, and communication experiences (1,2). Since nursing students spend a significant part of their education period in the clinical environment, clinical competencies and professional identities of future nurses are shaped in this environment (3). Some difficulties that may occur in this learning environment cause students to experience stress and anxiety or on the contrary to experience a very comfortable and very relax clinical experience in clinical sense (4).

Clinical practice successes of students are affected as a result of their positive or negative experiences in their clinical practices and their personal characteristics. These clinical practice successes are affected by factors such as anxiety, stress, concern, motivation, and self-efficacy levels (5). When the literature is examined, it was determined that nursing students mostly experience anxiety and stress in the clinical practice of Pediatric Nursing course within the scope of their education and concern while providing care (6-11). The studies have revealed that these anxieties of students in the pediatric clinics are caused by thoughts such as touching to a newborn baby, low doses of medication of children, harming the child, failure to communicate with the child and caregiver and thus inability to provide effective and suitable care, and inability to provide adequate psychosocial support (6,10). Clinical practice of this course can cause additional difficulties and stresses for students due to the difficulties of working with more than one family member and following changes in developmental needs. Education about health problems of children and their management are important outcomes of clinical experience in pediatric nursing (12). Because of all these reasons, it is seen that clinical nursing practices and especially pediatric nursing experiences can be stressful for students.

It is important that members of profession dealing with children primarily have a high level of liking children (13). Pediatric nursing is one of the most important nursing

fields established on child love, communication, and empathy (14). Since students work with child patients in pediatric clinics, they may feel positive emotions such as hope, love, trust, and happiness on the one hand and they may also feel negative emotions such as anger, fear, stress, and despair on the other hand (8). While these positive emotions increase the motivation and learning ability of the students, the negative emotions experienced decrease their willingness to learn and care. Students' levels of liking children decrease these negative attitudes significantly (7).

Courses about child in the school and clinical practices made in pediatric clinics affect and change the nursing students' levels of liking children (15,16). It has been found in many studies in the literature that the care applied by nursing students and nurses working in pediatric health care is associated with their levels of liking children and the pediatric nurses and student nurses' levels of liking children are affected by many factors. Some of these factors are seen to be the variables such as age, gender, marital status, number of siblings, status of having children, family structure, democratic family attitude, caregiving status, status of playing with child, and desire to work in pediatric clinics. Another important factor is internships in pediatric clinics (7,15,17).

Stress and anxiety experienced by students practicing in pediatric clinic affect their clinical performances and pose a clear threat to their success in clinical rotation. High anxiety level causes clinical skills not to be reflected on the patient and impairs the quality of care (6). On the contrary, it is believed that a student with good clinical comfort will better reflect all skills such as clinical skill, motivating and cooperating with the family, communicating with the child so that the quality of care will be enhanced. The aim of this study is to determine clinical comfort, worry and status of liking children among pediatric nursing students studying in universities located in east and west of Turkey.

#### *Research Questions*

- What is the level of clinical comfort and worry among Pediatric Nursing students in A and B university?
- What is the level of liking children among Pediatric Nursing students in A and B university?
- Is there a relationship between the clinical comfort, worry and status of liking children among Pediatric Nursing students A and B university?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### *Setting and Sample*

The data of this descriptive and correlational study were collected in nursing faculties located in east (A University) and west (B University) provinces between April-May 2020. The population of the study was composed of a total of 400 third-year students (250 students in A University; 150 students in B University) taking pediatric nursing course in the faculties where the study was conducted. Simple random sampling method was used in the study. The sample of the study consisted of 211 students (111 students in A University; 100 students in B University) who participated in the online survey voluntarily between the specified dates. As a result of the prior power analysis performed by using the G.Power 3.1.9.2 program, when 210 students were included in the study, it was determined that its size effect was 0.5, power was 95% and  $\alpha$  type error estimation was 0.05. By predicting that there would be losses, 215 students were included in the study and the study was completed with 211 students. This number pointed out that the sample size was adequate (18).

### *Measurement*

The data of the study were collected using "Sociodemographic Characteristics Form", "Clinical Comfort and Worry Assessment Tool of Pediatric Nursing Students" and "Barnett Liking of Children Scale".

### *Sociodemographic Characteristics Form*

The information form prepared by the researcher in line with the relevant literature (7,8,11,15) involves questions about the students' age, gender, high school they graduated from, the place they have mostly resided in, family type, number of siblings, parents' education level, parent's working status, income status, liking of pediatric clinics, and status of having anxiety and stress in pediatric clinics.

### *Clinical Comfort and Worry Assessment Tool of Pediatric Nursing Students*

The measurement tool was developed by Al-Qaaydeh et al., in 2012 (6). It was adapted to Turkish by Arslan et al. in 2018 (4). It is composed of a total of 11 questions showing worry level (5 questions) and the comfort level (6 questions) during practice of the students in the pediatric clinic. It is a 4-Point Likert type scale including "I strongly agree", "I agree", "I disagree" and "I strongly disagree" options. The items 3 and 5 of the comfort subscale of the scale are reverse items. Instrument subscales are calculated by averaging individual items to determine an average comfort score and average worry score. Higher scores in the Comfort and Worry subscales indicate respectively

higher comfort and worry levels. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found as .89 for worry subscale and .68 for comfort subscale (4). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was found as .79 for worry subscale and .71 for comfort subscale.

### *Barnett Liking of Children Scale*

It was developed by Barnett and Sinisi to measure people's attitude toward children (19). Turkish validity and reliability study of the scale was conducted by Duyan and Gelbal (20). The items in the scale prepared according to 7-point Likert system are scored as "1=I strongly disagree and 7=I strongly agree". Total score to be taken from the scale consisting of 14 items varies between 14-98 points. Higher total score indicates that the people love children more. The items 3, 6, 10, and 13 of the scale are reversely scored. 14-38 points taken from the scale are rated as low, 39-74 points are rated as moderate and 75-98 points are evaluated as high score of liking children. The Cronbach' Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found as .92 (20). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was found as .94.

### *Data Collection*

In order to collect the data, ethics committee approval and written permissions from the related institutions were obtained. The data collection tools were applied as volunteerism-based participation in an online survey between the days of data collection. The survey link was created via Google forms. The survey link created by the researcher was sent to the students electronically and the students were asked to fill out and share the survey link. It took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete it.

### *Data Analysis*

The data were assessed in SPSS (Statistical Package For Social Sciences) 20.0 packaged software in the computer environment. Descriptive statistics and mean as well as Kurtosis and skewness coefficients for the determination of compliance of data to normal distribution were used to analyze the data. Independent samples t-test (in normal distributions) was used. Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculation and correlation analysis were carried out. Significance level was accepted as  $p < 0.05$ .

### *Ethical Considerations*

Before starting the study, approval from Ethics Committee and then written permission from the related institutions were obtained. After the students included in the study were informed about the purpose and the application method of the study, their verbal and written consents were obtained. Ethical principles were provided in the study.

## RESULTS

It was determined that 82% of the nursing students studying in University A were female, 83.8% were in the age range of 21-23 years, 71.2% graduated from Science/Anatolian High School, 51.4% were residing in city center, 82.9% had a nuclear family, 52.3% had 1-3 siblings, 81.1% had social security, 70.3% expressed their income status as "income is equal to expenses", 50.5% of their mothers were primary school graduates, 94.6% were unemployed, 48.7% of the fathers were primary school graduates and the professions of 29.7% were in civil servant/worker group, 81.1% liked the internship in pediatric clinics, 74.8% experienced anxiety and stress in these clinics, and 86.5% played games with children (Table 1).

It was also found that 80% of the nursing students studying in University B were female, 77% were in the age range of 21-23 years, 72% graduated from Science/Anatolian High School, 59% were residing in the city center, 82% had a nuclear family, 58% had 4 or more siblings, 87% had social security, 68% expressed their income level as "income is equal to expenses", 55% of mothers had primary school degree and 91% were unemployed, 47% of the fathers were secondary school graduates and 39% were in the self-employment group, 72% liked the internship in the pediatric clinics, 84% experienced anxiety and stress in the pediatric clinics, and 76% played games with children (Table 1).

**Table 1. Distribution of Students According to Sociodemographic Characteristics (n=211)**

Sociodemographic Characteristics		Total		A uni.		B uni.	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender	Female	171	81	91	82	80	80
	Male	40	19	20	18	20	20
Age	18-20	29	13.7	16	14.4	13	13
	21-23	170	80.6	93	83.8	77	77
	24 and over	12	5.7	2	1.8	10	10
School graduation	General High School	38	18	15	13.5	23	23
	Science/Anatolian High School	151	71.6	79	71.2	72	72
	Vocational High School	11	5.2	9	8.1	2	2
	Private High School	11	5.2	8	7.2	3	3
Living place	City	116	55	57	51.4	59	59
	Country	57	27	34	30.6	23	23
	Village	38	18	20	18.0	18	18
Family type	Nuclear	174	82.5	92	82.9	82	82
	Extended	37	17.5	19	17.1	18	18
Number of siblings	0	7	3.3	1	0.9	6	6
	1-3	94	44.6	58	52.3	36	36
	4 and over	110	52.1	52	46.8	58	58
Social security status	Available	177	83.9	90	81.1	87	87
	No	34	16.1	21	18.9	13	13
Income level	Less than expenditure	47	22.3	22	19.8	25	25
	Equal income and expenditure	146	69.2	78	70.3	68	68
	More than expenditure	18	8.5	11	9.9	7	7
Mother's educational background	Illiterate	49	23.2	33	29.7	16	16
	Primary school	111	52.6	56	50.5	55	55
	Secondary school	51	24.2	22	19.8	29	29
Father's educational background	Illiterate	11	5.2	9	8.1	2	2
	Primary school	94	44.6	54	48.7	40	40
	Secondary school	76	36	29	26.1	47	47
	Faculty	30	14.2	19	17.1	11	11
Mother's employment status	Unemployed	196	92.9	105	94.6	91	91
	Employed	15	7.1	6	5.4	9	9
Father's occupation	Unemployed	29	13.7	21	19.0	8	8
	Civil servant/worker	63	29.9	33	29.7	30	30
	Self-employment	69	32.7	30	27.0	39	39
	Retired	50	23.7	27	24.3	23	23
Liking the internship in children's clinics	Yes	162	76.8	90	81.1	72	72
	No	49	23.2	21	18.9	28	28
Anxiety and stress in pediatric clinics	Yes	167	79.1	83	74.8	84	84
	No	44	20.9	28	25.2	16	16
Playing with the child	Yes	172	81.5	96	86.5	76	76
	No	39	18.5	15	13.5	24	24

In the study, the comfort subscale mean score was higher in the nursing students studying in the University B and the difference was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Although BLCS mean score was higher in the nursing students studying in the University A, the result was not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ , Table 2).

Clinical Comfort and Worry Assessment Tool of Pediatric Nursing Students	A uni. Mean±SD	B uni. Mean±SD	t*	p**
Comfort	14.47±2.59	15.44±2.42	-2.773	0.006
Worry	11.77±2.59	11.40±2.95	0.982	0.327
Total	26.25±2.56	26.84±3.00	-1.535	0.126
Barnett Liking of Children Scale	80.13±15.00	77.54±17.50	1.150	0.252

\*Independent samples t-test  
\*\* $p < 0.05$

It was determined that there was a statistically positive moderate significant correlation between levels of liking children and the comfort subscale and a statistically negative moderate significant correlation between levels of liking children and the worry subscale in nursing students studying in the Universities A and B ( $p < 0.05$ , Table 3).

A Uni.		Comfort	Worry
BLCS	r	0.521	-0.496
	p*	0.020	0.039
	n	111	111
B Uni.		Comfort	Worry
BLCS	r	0.423	-0.425
	p*	0.025	0.025
	n	100	100

\* $p < 0.05$

## DISCUSSION

Students taking the Pediatric Nursing course may experience stress and anxiety when they first encounter sick children in clinical rotations. The stress and anxiety experienced by the students during the rotation of pediatric clinic may prevent their learning and decrease their clinical performances. Therefore, it is very important to understand the main reasons of the anxiety and stresses of the students and manage them (11).

In the present study, it was found that the nursing students studying in the Universities A (74.8%) and B (84%) expressed that they experienced high levels of anxiety and stress in pediatric clinics. In the study conducted by Lassche et al., in 2013, it was found that nursing students experienced high anxiety and low comfort in internship in the pediatric clinic at the beginning of the semester (10). The similarity between our study and Lassche et al., is that nursing students stated that they experienced high levels of anxiety and stress during their pediatric clinic internship at the beginning of the semester. This may be caused by the factors like students' encounter sick children for the first time, their insufficient knowledge about how to practice on these young age group they meet for the first time, and their inability to communicate with the children or their family.

It was determined in the present study that the comfort levels of nursing students studying in the Universities A and B were high and their anxiety levels were low. The comfort level of the nursing students studying in the University B was higher than those in the University A. In the study conducted by Mutlu et al., in 2020 with the title of "Investigating the correlation of the clinical comfort and anxiety state with self-efficacy perception in students taking the Pediatric Nursing course", they found similar results (11). In the study conducted by Çunkuş et al., in 2021 with the title of "The relationship between worry and comfort levels and communication skills of nursing students during pediatric clinic applications: a descriptive study", they found similar results (21). This similarity may be related to the sample groups of our and other studies.

One of the main characteristics of nurses working in the pediatric field is that they like children (14). In the present study, it was found that the liking of children levels of the nursing students studying in the universities A and B were high. In the other studies conducted with nursing students, the liking of children status was also found to be high (7,8,16,22-24). The results of the present study are similar to the study results in literature. In addition, it is a pleasing result that nursing students have a high level of liking children. These students are believed to have less anxiety and stress in case of working in pediatric clinics in their future professional lives, to be able to gain the family's confidence by involving them into the care, to communicate with the child comfortably, to be able to provide care with therapeutic games and thus keep the quality of care at high level required.

It was determined that there was a statistically positive moderate significant correlation between the liking of children level of the nursing students studying in the Universities A and B and the comfort subscale and a statistically negative moderate significant correlation between their level of liking children and the worry subscale. It can be asserted that nursing students liking children are more comfortable and less anxious in the pediatric clinic. This result can be thought to be associated with the education the students received, positive experiences, the sensitivity to raise children in the society and good communication between the students and their parents.

## LIMITATIONS

The limitation of this research is that it was conducted among nursing students in two universities where the researchers work. The results cannot be generalized to all undergraduate nursing students in Turkey.

## CONCLUSION

In the present study, it was found that the liking of children status of the students studying in the Universities A and B was high. The comfort level of nursing students studying at University B was higher compared to those studying in University A. There was a statistically positive moderate significant correlation between levels of liking children and the comfort subscale and a statistically negative moderate significant correlation between levels of liking children and the worry subscale in nursing students studying in the Universities A and B.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDIATRIC NURSING

Members of the profession who take care of the child should have a high level of child love. Students' levels of stress, anxiety and liking children in the pediatric clinic rotation should be determined to improve the quality of care. The causes of students experiencing stress and anxiety should be found and solutions should be found. Simulation training is recommended prior to clinical practice. Future research should be done using this tools to evaluate pediatric nursing students at different universities.

## DECLARATIONS

### *Ethical Approval*

This study received 06/04/2020 dated and 2020-3/2 numbered approval was taken from Erzurum Atatürk University Faculty of Nursing Ethical Board.

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### *Authorship Statement*

All listed authors meet the authorship criteria and that all authors are in the agreement with the content of the manuscript.

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