

# FINLAND AND TURKISH NURSING STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ELDERLY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** It is essential for nursing students to have positive attitude towards elderly in order to improve care quality.  
**Objectives:** This research was conducted in order to compare the attitude of nursing students from two different countries towards elder patients.  
**Procedure:** The process of this comparative and descriptive research was composed of two 1st and 2nd grade nursing care students (N=1124). No sample was chosen, 345 students accepting the participation were included. Data was collected with a questionnaire form and an "Attitude Towards Elder People" scale. numbers, percentage distributions, averages, standard deviations, t tests and unidirectional variance analysis were used in the analysis of data.  
**Findings:** The students' average age was 21.26±4.2 where 83,5% (n=288) were female, 60,3%(n=208) were 1st grade students. Considering the low dimensions, Finland's " positive attitude" low group's average point is 59.39±6.3; Turkey's "positive attitude" low groups's average point is60.61+9.7. Finland's "negative attitude" low group's average point is 62.38±5.5, Turkey's"negative attitude" low group's average point is 59.13±9.7. It was pointed out that Finland's students' average point in terms of negative attitude was higher and that the difference was statistically meaningful (p<0.05).  
**Result:** It was pointed out that nursing student's positive attitude towards elders was low. Adding geriatrics and geriatric patient care into the nursing education program,symposiums,panelsand conventions, increasing number of in-service training is important in order to improve nurse'sattitude towards the elderly positively.

**Keywords:** Nursing student, elderly, attitude

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

### Type of Research

This research was conducted in a comparative and descriptive way.

### Population and Sample

The population of this research was composed of Gazi University Health Sciences Faculty and Finland Turku University of Applied Science 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students studying the nursing care department. Unselected sample, the study were include the students who agree to participate in research (n=345) and universe consists of 1224 persons. Confidence level of 95%, confidence interval 0.05, the sample size is calculated as 286 according to the universe in accordance with this universe. we have decided that sample size (n=345) is sufficient for the study.

### Data Collecting Tools

Data of research had been collected in line with a prepared questionnaire form and Kogan's "Attitude Towards Elder People" scale. The questionnaire form consists of 10 close-ended questions aiming sociodemographic attributes such as age, sex, class etc.

### Data Analysis

The research was conducted between January-April 2016. The questionnaire form was carried out outside the students' class hours. Before carrying out the questionnaire form, the students had been informed about the objectives of the research. Students who had accepted attending the questionnaire were given the forms and asked to fill them under the supervision of researchers. Carrying out the questionnaire took about 15-20 minutes.

### Data Assessment

Data obtained from the research was assessed after SPSS16.0 (Statistical Package of Social Sciences). In data analysis numbers, percentage distribution averages, standard deviations, t tests were used. Data which showed normal distribution was assessed in two separate groups by applying t tests. 0.05 was used for relevance level.

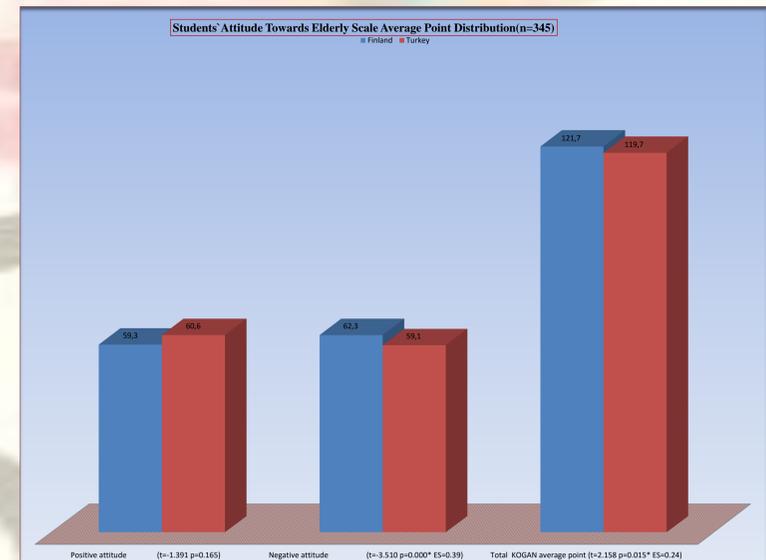
## RESULTS

It was found that students' average age was 21.26±4.2 where 83,5% were female (n=288), 63 % (n=208) were 1<sup>st</sup> grade students.

Chart 1. Students Attributes Towards Situations Related with Elderly (n=345)

Features related to aging-related condition	TURKEY (n=213)		FINLAND (n=132)	
	n	%	n	%
Elderly age detection status				
45 years and under	9	4.2	1	0.8
Between 46-64 years	90	42.3	24	18.2
65 years and over	114	53.5	107	81.1
Living conditions with the elderly at home				
Yes	59	27.7	5	3.8
No	154	72.3	127	96.2
The training language training before age-related condition				
Yes	19	8.9	62	47.0
No	194	91.1	70	53.0
Life experience dealing with older people				
Yes	74	34.7	19	14.4
No	139	65.3	113	85.6
Experience experienced about older people *				
Caring for older family members	82	23.8	50	14.5
Work in a job serving to the elderly	38	11.0	72	20.9
Visiting elderly people	104	30.2	106	30.7
The status of the frequency of contact with older people				
Everyday	55	25.8	5	3.8
One or twice a week	70	32.8	69	52.2
Once a month	70	32.9	55	41.7
Never	18	8.5	2	2.3
Willingness situation in the future, care for the elderly				
Yes	72	33.8	61	46.2
No	39	18.3	27	20.5
I don't know	102	47.9	44	33.3

\* Multiple options are marked.



\*\*If ES<0.3 small; 0.3<ES<0.08 medium; ES>0.8 ise large; p<0.05\*

It was found that the negative attitude towards the elder individuals average point for the students in Finland is higher and that the difference between the groups in terms of statistics is meaningful(p<0.05) .

## DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in order to compare the attitudes of nursing care students towards elderly in two different countries. Negative attitudes toward the old are much higher as a percentage in modern societies than in traditional societies (13). The people in the environment where the elder are living and the people's roles are important in order to perceive the old age productively, healthily and qualitatively (1). Especially, due to the increasing life-span and the number of elderly in the general population, an increase in health problems, insufficiency and incompetency can be seen. Considering the practice area of nursing as human and regarding its fundamentals in people's care (14), the nurse's negative prejudices, values, beliefs and attitudes toward the elderly are reflecting the quality of healthcare (15). Therefore, positive attitudes towards the old practised by people making up the elder's environment, especially today's nursing students and tomorrow's nurses, are essential in terms of health care quality. During our studies it was found that the attitude of Finnish and Turkish nursing students towards the old was positive. It can also be seen in literature, that attitudes towards the old are generally positive (6, 10, 16, 17).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMADATION

During our studies, we saw that student in both countries had an average level of attitude towards the old and that the negative attitude average point of Finland's students towards the old was higher (p<0.05). In line with this result it is important to add geriatrics and geriatric patient care into the nursing education program and, related to this, encouraging students to attend symposiums, panels and conventions to evaluate students' attitude towards elderly, that activities linked with elder individuals must take place in responsibility projects in order to improve nursing students' attitude towards elderly.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is mentioned that every month approximately 800.000 people step into older age (1) and it is estimated that there will be more than 800 million elders world-wide in 2025 (2). According to Turkey Statistics Foundation's data, 65 years and over make up 8% of the society (3). It is expected that this percentage will rise up to 9.9% in 2025(4). According to 2015 aging report, 65 years and over make up 20,2% of the society (5). As world-wide, the increasing number of the elder population in our country requires planning of socialcare services intended for configuration of elderly and elderly's health. In order to make successful planning at national level and put it into practice, the point of view and the attitude of health personnels who will serve these groups, medicine and nursing care students need to be determined (6). Generally, elderly are seen as a group who "occupies beds, needs to stay a long time in hospitals, reduces the effectiveness of hospitals" and are also registered in the health system as failures in case they can't be treated (7). Due to the increase of the population, encountering the problems with aging each passing day is inevitable. One part of these problems is rooted in the old people's physical,mental, economic situation and the other part in the old people's outside environmental conditions (8). Old people are regarded as a trouble for the society because problems increase in numbers with aging. This situation is reflecting in the service and the care provided for the old, hence, the elderly's care is an undesired working field. Living with old persons, however, is seen unacceptable (9). The negative influence on old people's care and aging perception thoughts lead to negative attitude of nurses and nursing students towards the old. In line with some investigations aiming the student nurses' attitude towards aging and old age people, it was found that students maintained a positive attitude towards the old (10), whereas, in some other studies they showed a negative attitude (11). As reported by the studies, the negative attitude was due to the fact that they regarded the old as passive, boring, fragile, depressive and arrogant (11). It is said that cultural and individual beliefs had as much impact as the youth's fear of death, youth's physical beauty and attraction, decrease in productivity, demoralization and a harmed physical and mental health with aging which composed the negative image of elderly (6). Nursing of the old requires an interdisciplinary group approach where the nurse has a central role and importance. Considering today's student nurses as tomorrow's professional nursing staff, their positive attitude towards elderly will also be effective in the nursing quality they practice (12).

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