

## **The Attitudes and Opinions of Women in Turkey about the Male Nurses Who Worked at the Maternity and Childbirth Service**

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### **Abstract**

**Aim:** *This study was conducted in order to determine the attitudes and opinions of women patients about the male nurses who worked at the maternity and childbirth service.*

**Method:** *The population of the research was consisted of 150 women who were selected using simple random sampling method and went to the Maternity and Childbirth Service of Çorum State Hospital between June 2011 and August 2011. The data were gathered using the Form to Determine the Attitudes and Opinions of Women about the Male Nurses and were analyzed using percentages and chi-square test in a computerized environment.*

**Findings:** *All of the participant women did not want to receive care from male nurses throughout pregnancy and labor period. Nearly nine of the ten pregnant women emphasized that nursing was a profession that only women could do, that male nurses could not work at the maternity and childbirth services and that they could not receive care from male nurses throughout pregnancy and labor period (96.7%).*

**Conclusion:** *It was found out that the participant women who were hospitalized at the service wanted to receive care from female nurses and that their attitudes and opinions about male nurses were negative.*

**Key Words:** Maternity and Childbirth Service, Male Nurse, Attitude, Opinion

### **1. Introduction And Aim**

Nursing is an effective and important profession in health care system and focuses on patient care with a holistic mentality not only during the time of illness but also during the time of protection and improvement of health. For centuries, nursing –which has long been known as a profession for women- has almost been identified with women’s compassion, curative role and devotion of their nature. Particularly, nursing history started with the curative role of the women in the early ages but men started to take part in patient care together with women (Arthur, &Randie, 2007; Kaya,Turan, &Öztürk, 2011). The first organized patient care service was provided by men called Dekon and women called by Dekones in monotheistic religions. The independency and efficacy of nursing peaked thanks to the Catholic Church in the middle-ages. However; due to the religious, political and economical turbulence of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, nursing worsened; which caused a black era for nursing. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, patient cure and nursing services were provided by Saint John Knights Hospitaliers (Mackintosh, 1997; Takase, Kershaw, &Burt, 2001).

The nursing of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a health discipline that was mainly composed of men until Florence Nightingale. Nursing regained its power and independency after Florence Nightingale -the founder of professional nursing- and became a women-dominant profession. Today, nursing is not regarded as a woman-profession and boys are accepted to nursing schools with legal regulations and male nurses are trained. In our country, the first legal regulation made about this issue was “Law to change Nursing Code” that was published in the Official gazette in 2007 and stipulated to change the Nursing Code of 1954 which did not meet the needs of today (Official Gazette. Number: 26510. 02.05.2007 date and 5634 “Law to change Nursing Code”). The new Nursing Code of 2007 cancelled the article of the Nursing Code of 1954 (Official Gazette. Number: 8647. 02.03.1954 date 6283) that banned men from nursing and it opened a new era in nursing profession.

Today, the place of the male nurses in nursing care system is still disputable and therefore researches are needed to explore women patients' opinions about men's taking part in services such as -especially- in maternity and childbirth clinics where "gender discrimination" is still prevalent. Therefore, results of these researches are very important in the sense that we can get more insight about the fields/departments where male nurses can work. In our country, there is a limited number of studies about "male nurses" when the literature is investigated (Özbaşaran, Taşpınar, & Çakmakçı, 2002; Kocaer, Öztop, Usta, Gökçek, Bahçecik, & et al., 2004; Özdemir, Akansel, Tunk, 2008; Tezel, Akpınar, Yurttas, & Çelebioğlu, 2008 ; Ünsal, Akalın, & Yılmaz, 2010, Kaya,Turan, &Öztürk, 2011) ; which was a determinant factor to plan this present research.

## **2. Tools and Method**

### **2.1. Method of The Research**

This study is a descriptive study to explore the attitudes and opinions of women patients about the male nurses who worked at the maternity and childbirth service.

### **2.2. Population and Sample of The Research**

The population of the research was consisted of 150 women who were selected using simple random sampling method and went to the Maternity and Childbirth Service of Çorum State Hospital between June 2011 and August 2011.

### **2.3. Data Collection Tools**

The data were gathered using the Form to Determine the Attitudes and Opinions of Women about the Male Nurses and were analyzed using percentages and chi-square test in a computerized environment.

#### **2.3.1. The Form to Determine the Attitudes and Opinions of Women about the Male Nurses**

The first part of the *Form to Determine the Attitudes and Opinions of Women about the Male Nurses* includes questions about descriptive information such as age, educational status, employment status, family type, economical status, reason for hospitalization, service where the women were hospitalized. The second part of the form includes 20 statements to explore the attitudes and opinions of women about male nurses. These statements are answered with 3 answers: "I agree / I do not agree / I am undecided"

### **2.4. Analysis of the Data**

The data obtained from the research were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 statistical package program. Percentages and chi-square test were used to analyze the data.

### **2.5. Ethical Consideration of the Research**

The necessary official permissions from the Çorum State Hospital were obtained in order to implement pretest and posttest of the research. The participant women were told that the information would be confidential and their oral informed consents were obtained and volunteer participants were included in the research.

## **3. Findings**

It was found out that three of the five participant women were aged between 26 and 33. Nearly half of the women had secondary school degree and their economical status was moderate. Three of the five women were employed and worked. All of the participant women were married and three of the five women had nuclear family type (Table 1).

**Table 1. Distributions of Some Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Women**

Characteristics	N	%
<b>Age</b>		
26-33	120	80.7
34 ≥	30	19.3
<b>Educational Status</b>		
Primary	32	21.3
Secondary	78	52.0
High school and over	40	26.7
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed	52	34.7
Non employed	128	85.3
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	150	100.0
Single	0.0	0.0
<b>Family Type</b>		
Nuclear	90	60.0
Extended	60	40.0
<b>Economical Status</b>		
Bad	28	18.7
Moderate	76	50.7
Good	46	30.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

When the distributions of the reason for hospitalization and the service where the participant women were hospitalized were investigated, it was noted that most of the women (80%) were hospitalized for labor. Nearly half of the women (53.3%) were treated at the birth room and nearly half of them (40.0%) were treated at the postpartum service. Besides, it was noted that 6.7% of the women were treated at the septic service (Table 2).

**Table 2. Distributions of the reason for hospitalization and the service where the participant women were hospitalized**

Characteristics	N	%
<b>Reason for hospitalization</b>		
Pregnancy Complications	10	6.7
Labor	120	80.0
Postpartum Complications	20	13.3
<b>Service where they received treatment</b>		
Birth Room	80	53.3
Postpartum Service	60	40.0
Septic Service	10	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In the present research, all of the women did not prefer receiving care from male nurse during pregnancy and labor whereas nearly all of them preferred receiving treatment from male-doctors (94.7%). It was seen that nearly nine of the ten participant women were of the opinion that nursing was a profession that should be done only by women, male nurses could not work at childbirth services and they could not get care from male nurses during pregnancy / labor (96.7%). All of the women told that they would be disturbed if such treatments as vaginal examination, urethral catheter procedure, examination of incision site, medical dressing (incision site / perineal site), and perineal care were carried out by male nurses. Nearly nine of the ten women stated that they would be disturbed if such practices as mobilization / positioning after birth, hygiene / dressing were provided by male nurses and if they were given information about breast care, breast feeding, puerperium exercises and family planning / sexuality and baby care by male nurses. Yet, nearly nine of the ten women told that they would not be disturbed if such practices as abdominal examination, listening to the baby's heartbeats, non stress test, measurement of blood pressure, blood-letting and serum injection were performed by male nurses (Table 3). The analysis performed demonstrated that there was a statistically insignificant correlation between age, educational status, employment status, family type and economical status and the statements of "I prefer receiving care from male nurses during pregnancy and labor.", "Nursing is a profession that only women can do.", "Male nurses can work at the birth services.", "I can get care from male nurses during pregnancy and labor. (p>0.05).

**Table 3. Distributions of women according to their attitudes and opinions about male nurses.**

Characteristics	N	%
<b>I prefer receiving treatment from male physician during pregnancy and labor process.</b>		
I agree	142	94.7
I do not agree	8	5.3
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>I prefer receiving care from male nurses during pregnancy and labor process.</b>		
I agree	0	0.0
I do not agree	100	100.0
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>Nursing is a profession that only women can do</b>		
I agree	2	1.3
I do not agree	145	96.7
I am undecided	3	2.0
<b>Male nurses can work at maternity and childbirth services.</b>		
I agree	2	1.3
I do not agree	145	96.7
I am undecided	3	2.0
<b>I can get care from male nurses during pregnancy and labor process</b>		
I agree	12	8.0
I do not agree	135	90.0
I am undecided	3	2.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses perform abdominal examination.</b>		
I agree	135	90.0
I do not agree	12	8.0
I am undecided	3	2.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses perform vaginal examination.</b>		
I agree	150	100.0
I do not agree	0	0.0
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses perform urethral catheter.</b>		
I agree	150	100.0
I do not agree	0	0.0
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses listen to heart beats of the baby and perform NST.</b>		
I agree	12	8.0
I do not agree	135	90.0
I am undecided	3	2.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses perform measurement of blood pressure, blood-letting, serum injection.</b>		
I agree	2	1.3
I do not agree	145	96.7
I am undecided	3	2.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses perform labor.</b>		
I agree	150	100.0
I do not agree	0	0.0
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses perform postpartum position or mobilization.</b>		
I agree	142	94.7
I do not agree	8	5.3
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses help such activities as hygiene and dressing after birth.</b>		

I agree	142	94.7
I do not agree	8	5.3
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses examine incision site, perform medical dressing, perform perineal care after birth.</b>		
I agree	150	100.0
I do not agree	0	0.0
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses provide training about breast care and breast feeding.</b>		
I agree	140	93.3
I do not agree	10	6.7
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses provide training about puerperium.</b>		
I agree	140	93.3
I do not agree	10	6.7
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>I will be disturbed if male nurses provide training about family planning and sexuality.</b>		
I agree	140	93.3
I do not agree	10	6.7
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>I prefer getting counseling about baby care from female nurse.</b>		
I agree	140	93.3
I do not agree	10	6.7
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>Male nurses cannot be successful at maternity and childbirth services.</b>		
I agree	140	93.3
I do not agree	10	6.7
I am undecided	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### 4. Discussion

Today, nursing profession is mainly dominated by female gender. Yet, the number of the male nurses has been continually increasing due to globalization and the increasing health needs. 10% of the nurses in the USA and England is composed of male nurses (Kaya, Turan, & Öztürk, 2011). Although we do not have certain information about the number of the male nurses in Turkey, it is estimated that the number is rather small. The place of the male nurses in the health care system is still a matter of dispute. It is highlighted in some of the researches that male nurses are important in the sense that gender balance should be attained, negative points created by the fact that nursing is a women-dominated profession should be decreased and the image of nursing profession should be improved (Taşçı, 2007; Kaya, Turan, & Öztürk, 2011) whereas some studies emphasized that individuals who are used to female nurses may have negative feelings and opinions about male nurses (Tezel, Akpınar, Yurttaş, & Çelebioğlu, 2008; Ünver and Ürkmez, 2009).

All of the participant women told that they did not want to receive care from male nurses throughout pregnancy and labor period and nearly nine of ten pregnant women (96.7%) emphasized that nursing was a profession that only women could do. These findings indicated that the women of the Turkish society had still negative feelings and opinions about the idea of male-nurse. In light of these findings, it may be concluded that women preferred receiving care from female nurses instead of male nurses in issues regarded as confidential and secret by them such as pregnancy and labor. This conclusion of ours was supported by the fact that nearly nine of the ten women told that they would be disturbed if some medical examinations and care (vaginal and abdominal examination, urethral catheter procedure, labor, hygiene / dressing, medical dressing, breast care, breast feeding) were performed by male nurses during pregnancy and labor process whereas they told that they would not be disturbed if such non invasive practices as measurement of blood pressure, blood-letting, serum injection, non stress test were performed by male nurses. However, nearly all of the participant women preferred receiving treatment from male doctors during pregnancy and birth process instead of female doctors while they did not want to get care from male nurses.

Another remarkable finding of our study was that nearly all of the women (93.3%) believed that male nurses would not be successful in maternity and childbirth services; which suggested that it was due to the fact that women were not used to seeing male nurses working at maternity and childbirth services, yet. Unlike our study; the study of Kaya, Turan and Öztürk (2011) pointed out that the success in nursing activities was more important than the gender of the nurses. Accordingly, it may be suggested that nursing profession has traditionally been identified with female gender and this perception has not changed yet. In Turkey, the labor process is performed by physicians first and then midwives. Nurses work particularly at postpartum services. Therefore, we thought that the fact that the gender of the midwives who performed labor process was female affected negatively the gender-perception of the participant women about male nurses who worked at maternity and childbirth services. As a conclusion, it was explored that pregnant women and puerperal women who were treated at maternity and childbirth services had negative attitudes and opinions about male nurses who worked at these services. In light of the research findings; it is concluded that male nurses should work at general services instead of maternity and childbirth services which are peculiar to female gender until the adaptation to the new and changing situation in nursing profession has been obtained. It may be recommended that the number of the sample be bigger and studies with control groups be conducted in order to get more reliable and more general results.

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