

## Examination of Nursing Students' Views and Behaviors on Sexual Health/ Reproductive Health

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### ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** This study is planned to determine the views and behaviors of nursing students about sexual health / reproductive health. **Materials and Methods:** The universe of the research which is planned as descriptive was created by 211 students who studying in Department of Nursing of Adıyaman University School of Health. In this study, between the dates of April 1 and May 30 2011, it has tried to the whole universe without sample choice, however at the time of the survey was conducting the students who did not want to fill the questionnaire or who were absent were excluded from the study and so, 133 students were enrolled. The questionnaire was consisted of 39 questions that including 22 questions about demographic data and 17 questions to determine the level of knowledge and behaviors about sexual health / reproductive health. The obtained data encoded in SPSS 17.0 and in analysis number, percentage and chi-square test were used. **Results:** 33.8% of students were male, 99.2% were single, 38.3% were second grader and the average age of participants were  $21,08 \pm 2,14$ . 42.2% of the students stated that reproductive health education should start in primary school, 8.9% stated that they talk with their fathers and 6.8% stated they talk with their mothers about sexual health / reproductive health. When their resource of knowledge about sexuality was queried, 36.8% stated that were their friends. 15% of students stated that they had no sexual experience, 60% of students with sexual experience stated they were using contraceptive method during sexual experience. 75.9% of students stated that they are against sex without marriage. The difference between gender, age groups and living sexual experience situations was statistically significant ( $p=0.001$ ,  $p=0.011$ ).

**Conclusions:** It was found that most of students were not get informed by their mothers and fathers, they were obtaining information from their friends and print media, social norms and values and traditional approaches have influence on students' knowledge and behaviors about sexual health / reproductive health.

**Keywords:** nursing students, reproductive health, sexual health, sexual health knowledge

### Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) describes the age group between 10-19 as adolescence, 15-24 as youth. By the intersection of adolescence and youth age groups, 10-24 years of ages are considered as young people [1,2]. The period of youth is the years when the young person access to physical, psychological and social maturity and has change about sexuality overview [3]. The studies about adolescents' sexual health / reproductive health have an important

place on the international agenda since the World Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, 1994. In the action program of conference; "by reorganize the reproductive health programs to cover the needs of women and adolescents, there is need to innovative programs that will make the reproductive health information, counseling and reproductive health services are also attainable for adult males and adolescents" was stated and the importance of works set on reproductive health associated with adolescents was emphasized [4]. University period is a period that young people began to have a greater say over their own lives and it includes the first dates, first emotional and sexual approaches. Young people may be sexually active during this period. With the initiation of sexual activity, young people more exposed to the risks of

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unwanted pregnancy, unwanted miscarriages, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV / AIDS due to lack of knowledge of contraceptive methods and sexuality [1,5]. In 2003, according to Turkey Demographic and Health Survey, 15.5% of the 15-19 age group, 60.7% of 20-24 age group had sexual experience [6]. When the 2008 TDHS of data are evaluated, not asked questions about women's age at first intercourse, but 6.6% of the 15-19 age group, 44.7% of the 20-24 age group was determined to be married [7]. It is possible to say the university environment is determinant of the attitudes and behaviors of young people when it thought that it brought together many young people who have different backgrounds and experiences. It also can be higher rate of sexual activity among students in the university's relatively comfortable environment. As a result, this group should be considered to be at greater risk when there is no information about sexual health / reproductive health, no counseling and in necessary cases no clinical services provided opportunities available [4, 5]. This research is planned for the purpose of detection of opinions and behaviors regarding sexual health / reproductive health of nursing students in Adiyaman University School of Health in Turkey.

## Methods

The population of the research which is planned as descriptive was created by 211 students who studying at Adiyaman University School of Health in Turkey,

Nursing Department in 2010-2011 academic year. It has tried to the whole universe without sample choice, however at the time of the survey was conducting the students who did not want to fill the questionnaire or who were absent were excluded from the study and so, 133 students were enrolled. The survey consists of 39 questions. 22 questions consist of demographic data (age, gender, marital status, family type, area of residence, educational background of parents, talk to family about sexuality, information sources about sexuality and so on), and 17 questions specified for views and behaviors about sexual health (when education of sexual health start, sexual experience, using contraceptive methods while sexual intercourse, reasons to being against sexual intercourse before marriage). In order to conduct the study, written permission (Reference No: 2010-288) from Adiyaman University School of Health Directorate. In addition, all students participating the study were informed about the research and their verbal consents were obtained with respecting the principle of voluntary. Statistical analysis of data is coded in SPSS 17.0 and number, percentage and chi-square test applied.

## Result

When we consider the socio-demographic feature of participants of the survey, we see that 66.2% are women, 55.1% are in 21-24 group of age, 85% live in southeast region and mothers of 35.5% are not literate (Table 1). Their average of age is  $21,08 \pm 2.14$ .

**Table:1 Range of University Students According to Socio-Demographic Feature**

Demographic Variables	n	%
<b><u>Sexuality</u></b>		
Man	45	33.8
Woman	88	66.2
<b><u>Group of Age</u></b>		
17-20	53	39.8
21-24	72	54.1
24 ve üzeri	8	6.0
<b><u>Grade</u></b>		
1.Grade	35	26.3
2.Grade	51	38.3
3.Grade	29	21.8
4.Grade	18	13.5
<b><u>Marital Status</u></b>		
Married	1	0.8
Single	132	99.2
<b><u>Residence</u></b>		
Province	78	58.6
Country	31	23.3

<b>Village</b>	24	18.0
<b><u>Area of Residence</u></b>		
South-Eastern Anatolia	113	85.0
Mediterranean Region	13	9.8
Central Anatolia Region	3	2.2
Aegean-Marmara Region	4	3.0
<b><u>Family Type</u></b>		
Elementary Family	98	73.7
Extended Family	29	21.8
Broken Family	6	4.5
<b><u>Education of Mother</u></b>		
Illiterate	47	35.5
Literate	16	12.0
Primary School	50	37.0
Elementary School	9	6.8
High School	8	6.0
University	3	2.3
<b><u>Education of Father</u></b>		
Illiterate	6	4.5
Literate	25	18.8
Primary School	36	27.1
Elementary School	17	12.8
High School	27	20.3
University	22	16.5

48.9% of nursing students define sexual health as healthy sexuality, and 18% as health of sexual organ. 42.2% of them think that sexual health education should start at primary school. While 8.9% of them talk

about sexuality their mothers, 6.8% to their fathers. For 36.8% information source is friends or siblings, and for 27.1% books and magazines are information sources (Table 2).

**Table 2: Range of Students' Level of Knowledge on Sexual Health**

<b>Features</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b><u>What is sexual health?</u></b>		
Healthy sexuality	65	48.9
Health of sexual organ	24	18.0
Hygiene of sexual organ	3	2.3
Protection from venereal diseases	13	9.8
Regulate fertility	2	1.5
Contraception methods	1	0.8
Problems about sexuality and health of it	25	18.8
<b><u>When education of sexual health should start?</u></b>		
Preschool	14	10.5
Primary school	56	42.2
Highschool	49	36.8
University	14	10.5
<b><u>First source of information about sexual health</u></b>		
Family (parents)	29	21.8
Friends or siblings	49	36.8
Printed Media (book, magazine)	36	27.1
Visual Media (tv, cinema)	14	10.5
Any	5	3.8
<b><u>Situation of talking to mother about sexual health</u></b>		

Yes		
No	12	8.9
<b><u>B Situation of talking to father about sexual health</u></b>	121	91.1
Yes	9	6.8
No	124	93.2

15% of students have experienced sexual intercourse, and 60% of them have used contraceptives. 60% of the users have used condom. 75.9% of the students are against sexual intercourse before marriage for mainly

two reasons. First, 66.3% of them think that virginity is important. Second, 14.9% of them do not trust their partners (Table 3).

**Table 3: Range of the Status of University Students Sexual Life Experience**

Features	n	%
<b><u>Sexual Life Experience</u></b>		
Yes	20	15.0
No	113	85.0
<b><u>Situation of use of contraceptive in sexual experience</u></b>		
Used	12	60.0
Not used	6	30.0
Do not remember	2	10.0
<b><u>Contraceptive method in sexual experience</u></b>		
Condom	12	60.0
Back off	3	15.0
Contraceptive pill	1	5.0
Calender methor	2	10.0
Others	2	10.0
<b><u>View about sexual intercourse without marriage</u></b>		
Opposite	101	75.9
Possible	20	14.9
Must	12	9.0
<b><u>Reasons to beings against sexual intercourse without marriage</u></b>		
Social Pressure	4	4.0
Opposition of Family	2	2.0
Distrust of Partner	15	14.9
Virginity is important for me	67	66.3
Others	13	12.9

While 2.3% of female students indicate they have had sexual intercourse, 37.8% of male students indicate same. When we analyze relationship between group of age and sexual experience, 9.4% of 17-20 aged students have sexual experience and 50% of above 25

aged students have sexual experience. There are statistically significant difference between sexuality and group of age and sexual experience ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 4).

**Table 4: Comparison of Demographic Characteristics of Students with Sexual Life Experience**

Demographic feature	Sexual Life Experience				*X <sup>2</sup> p
	Yes		No		
	n	%	n	%	
<b>Sexuality</b>					
Female	2	2.3	86	97.7	*X <sup>2</sup> =33.170
Male	18	37.8	27	62.2	p=0.001
<b>Age</b>					
17-20	5	9.4	48	90.6	*X <sup>2</sup> = 8.96
21-24	11	13.9	61	86.1	p= 0.011
25 ve üzeri	4	50.0	5	50.0	

\* chi-square test

When we examine taking the services about sexual health, we see that 26.3% of students have took the services, and 80% of them on purpose of education. While their reasons to not taking services, 60.2% of

them stated they do not need, 10.2% because of shame, and 15.2% said there is no place to take services (Table 5).

**Table 5: Distribution of Services about Sexual Health**

Features	n	%
<b>Services about Sexual Health</b>		
Yes	35	26.3
No	98	73.7
<b>Reasons of taking sexual health services</b>		
Education	28	80.0
Protection	3	8.6
Consultancy	1	2.9
Treatment	3	8.6
<b>Reasons of not taking sexual health services:</b>		
No need	59	60.2
Be ashamed	10	10.2
No Place to Take	15	15.3
Not trust to instution which can give service	1	1.0
I talk to my friends	12	12.2
Others	1	1.0

## Discussion

When we examine the source of information of students, 36.8% stated their friends or siblings are source of information. 27.1% of students use books and magazines as source of information. Our research states that adolescents use friends, books, magazines and internet as source of information about sexual health, like other researches [5, 8-13]. It is known that peers and friends are important information sources [14]. When we consider this situation, it is useful to use peer education models for youngs sexual education [5].42.2% of students think that it is necessary to start

sexual health education at primary school. Some researches indicate that sexual education starts at elementary schools in our country. There is no sexual health education at primary school level in our country. We think that the mention of sexuality differences should start at primary school. Then, sexuality-based healthcare applications and mentions about importance of sexual health in elementary school which is also beginning of puberty age can be very helpful about learning sexual health. Parents are very important for young's sexual behavior [16]. Because of social and

cultural factors, the talk of sexual matters within the family is still seen as taboo [13]. In this survey, 8.9% of youngs talk about sex to mothers, and 6.8% to fathers. 44.1% of Hacettepe University students talking about sexual health to their mother, while 18.5% of them speaks to father. 19.5% of Dicle University students talking to his mother, 7.3% of them speaks to father. In the research of Karabulutlu and Kılıç, while 50.8% of students talk to their mother about sexual issues, 100% of students stated they never talk to their father about sexual issues [13]. It is seen in this research and other researches ratio of talking to mother about sexual issues is higher, because of authoritarian place of father in family in traditional communities. In our opinion, if the fathers can turn into moderate and democratic structure, teenagers would take more about sexual issues with their fathers. Researches show that in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia sexual issues are regarded as taboo, and talked within family much lower than other regions. It can be related to illiteracy and social and cultural conditions. Conversation between youngs and their parents about sexual issues should be encouraged in order to achieve healthy sexual development. Turkey goes through rapid changes in social, economic and cultural. In recent years, globalization and advances in technology are accelerating this change. Having sexual intercourse among youngs is increasing and first sexual experience age is decreasing [12]. When we look at the sexual experience condition of nursing students, 15% of them stated they have sexual experience. 2.3% of females and 37.8% of males have sexual experience. There is significant differences between females and males. In many researches made in Turkey shows that ratio of male university students who have sexual experience is higher than ratio of females [5,7,9,12,15,17,18,20,21]. Premarital sexual experience is called as 'adultery' in our country, and in our society people find adultery very shameful. In the west of country ratio of having sexual experience is higher than east. However, the difference between ratio of males and females who have sexual experience does not covered. Some think that because sexual experience is seen as taboo for females more than males, this difference occur. In this research, 60% of nursing students stated they use contraceptive methods, and 60% of them use condom as contraceptive method like other researches made in our country indicates [8,9,11,15,18,19,20]. Teenagers can have their first sexual experience without enough sexual knowledge. That is why unwanted pregnancies, adolescent pregnancies, unhealthy abortions, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV / AIDS health problems can be seen with unprotected sexual life. These problems can effect future sexual life. They are the

most important health problems of teenagers [20,22] the most important approach in order to prevent this health problems is early education. When we examine view of students about premarital sexual intercourse, 75.9% of the students are against sexual intercourse before marriage for mainly two reasons. First, 66.3% of them think that virginity is important. Second, 14.9% of them do not trust their partners. In the research of Güneş *et al.* with university students, 74.5% of them, and in research of Evcili *et al.* with tocology students, 85.1% of them, and in the research of Civil *et al.*, 60.5% of them, and in the research of Yılmaz *et al.* with students, 25.4% of them are against the premarital sexual intercourse [8,9,19,21]. Our research have parallels with other researches as you can see. The socio-cultural structure of Turkish society and its judgements about sex may lead the difference between females and males. When we examine taking the services about sexual health, we see that 26.3% of students have took the services, and 80% of them on purpose of education. In the research made by Koluçak *et al.* 11.5% of students have took services, and in the research made by Sevil *et al.* 44.7% of nursing students have took services, and in the research made by Dağ *et al.* 39.3% of students has took professional education about sexual health [4,10,11]. In the research made by Karabulutlu and Kılıç (2011), 47.9% of students have taken services on purpose of education, and 31.3% of them for consultancy [13]. In the research of Atan *et al.* 55% of students state they have not take education about sexual health. Our research has parallels with the examples above that most of the students have not take services about sexual health. Also, students who have services take in purpose of education or consultancy. When we examine why students have not take services, we reach the result that 62.2% of students stated they do not need, 10.2% of them because of shame, and 15.3% of them said there is no place to take this services. In Inonu University, 62.2% of students stated they do not need to take services, and 21.7% of them said there is no place to take services [4]. In the research of Karabulutlu and Kılıç (2011) made, 51.9% of students stated they do not need to take services, and 10.4% because of shame, and 9.1% said that there is no place to take services [13].

### Conclusion

As a result, most of the students are informed by their friends or printed media rather than their parents about sexual health. Also, social judgements and traditional approaches effect the information about sexual health. On the lights of these results, we suggest that education

programmes about sexual health should be produced by instructor, and a unit in the name of 'Youth Consultation Center' should be established in the university. Also, this research should be made on extensive sampling.

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