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# Identifying The Importance Level of Factors Influencing The Selection Of Nursing As A Career Choice Using AHP: Survey To Compare The Precedence Of Private Vocational High School Nursing Students And Their Parents

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## Abstract

Choosing a carrier is a kind of multi-criteria decision making problem and it is a crucial decision in people's life. The aim of this study was to determine the precedence order of the factors influencing choice of nursing as a carrier. The survey participants were the nursing students of Mektebim Anatolian Vocational High School for Health and their parents. In analyzing the data, Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) methodology was used. In this study, subjective opinions of nursing students and their parents turn into quantitative form with Analytic Hierarchy Process. This study found that “academic staff”, “want nursing profession” and “job guarantee” were more important factors for parents in choosing their children’s nursing career. Among the criteria, the criterion of “the security of nursing school”, “income of nursing profession” and “developing profession” had the highest weight for students. Results of this study can be used by school management, nurse leaders, Ministry Of National Education, Ministry Of Health, nursing academicians and education science academicians etc.

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## 1. Introduction

In 2010, The International Council of Nurses (ICN) on their official web site defined nursing with these words “Nursing encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings. Nursing includes the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and the care of ill, disabled and dying people. Advocacy, promotion of a safe environment, research, participation in shaping health policy and in patient and health systems management, and education are also key nursing roles”.

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Depends on the Health Statistics Yearbook 2010 there are 114.772 nurses working in Turkey (The Ministry of Health Turkey, 2010). Also Turkish Ministry for European Union (EU) Affairs report (2011) shows that there are 1.3 nurses per 1.000 people in Turkey while the average of this value in EU is 9.8 nurses per 1.000 people. Turkey has the lowest number of nurses per 1.000 people among EU countries. These quantitative data emphasizes the shortages of nurses in Turkey.

Choosing a career is a major issue for young people (Neilson et al., 2010). The age of middle school student is very early age for determining a profession such as nursing. How does a student know when he/she is 13 year olds whether he/she is going to be suited to nursing? Therefore parents have active role for directing their children to Vocational High Schools. Introduction to nursing careers during elementary school period decrease the nursing shortage problem (Lauver, 2011). Misperception (Porter et al., 2009) and unrealistic expectations (O'Donnell, 2011) of nursing among middle and high school students is a major problem for nursing profession's future. Summer camp experiences (Flores and Ashe, 2012), high school information sessions, presentations, nurse shadowing programs (Bang et al., 2011) are some of the efforts to change the image of nursing. Advanced practice nursing, travel nursing, technologically advanced nursing, academic career of nursing are some nursing profession areas that students are unfamiliar and unaware (Porter et al., 2009). Neilson and Jones study (2012) determined that nursing is not a popular career amongst 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year school students. Increasing middle school students' interest in the profession of nursing is a kind of effective strategy for decreasing nursing shortage problem (Cohen et al., 2004).

Why nursing students choose to go into nursing profession is very important information for Higher Nursing Education and Health Care Institutions (Mooney et al., 2008). Many complex factors affect career choice of individuals. Dal et al. (2009) analyzed a sample of students studying their BAs in the department of nursing and found that the possibility of finding employment easily and the value given the profession by the society are the two significant factors for the students in choosing the nursing profession. Positive image of nurses, impact of family and relatives, perception of nursing as a career, knowing a nurse personally, good salary with job security are some of the factors that influence students to consider nursing as their career (Cho et al., 2010; Law et al., 2003). Finding which factors are important for students reinforce that the nursing high school management need to be cognizant of the demands for students (Pettigrew et al., 2011). The research of Rossiter et al. (1999) indicated that students who were acquainted with a nurse show higher intention to pursue nursing as a career. Family, friends and relatives in the profession played an important role in influencing participants' career selection (Mooney et al., 2008; Cohen et al., 2004).

Multi-criteria decision making technique called Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) is applied to determine the relative weights of the evaluation criteria. AHP approach achieves pairwise comparisons among factors or criteria in order to prioritize them using the eigenvalue calculation. AHP model was represented in a questionnaire to survey nursing students' and parents' opinions. The relative weight of each factor in the model was calculated.

The majority of studies indicated that one of the most important reason for choosing nursing as a career was job guarantee (Ozpancar et al., 2008). Several studies have shown that nursing is considered to be career, that provides wide range of job opportunity and job security. While previous research has revealed that many factors affect nursing students' choice of nursing as a career, the relative weight of each of these factors remains unclear. A comprehensive literature review revealed that while some articles have been published about identifying factors of nursing students career choice, socio-demographic attributes (Wright et al, 1998; Al-Kandari and Ajao, 1998) and socio-economic issues (Rose et al., 2011) and autonomy level (Karagozoglu, 2008) of nursing students, there were no studies related to AHP based preference determination of nursing students in high schools in Turkey. Similar study was done for medical students' choice of specialty in Taiwan by Chang et al. (2006).

## 2. Study objectives

The aim of this study is to propose a multi-criteria decision-making approach to evaluate the nursing students' preference orders, to examine both students and their parents' perceptions of nursing career and nursing school and to analyze factors influencing nurses' choice of nursing profession as a career and identify differences and similarities in such factors between nursing students and their parents. The purposes of this study were to use

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