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## THE SURVEY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL CLIMATE AND THE STUDENTS' CURRICULUM ATTITUDE IN SARI MEDICAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

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Received on 04-05-2016

Accepted on 30-05-2016

### Abstract:

**Introduction:** the individual's attitude towards the field of study or curriculum major has been described as a combination of cognitions, feelings and individual's preparation for acting in conjunction to the field of study which is found to change subject to real observations in the clinical environment. The current study aims at the survey of the relationship between ethical climate and students' curriculum attitude in Sari medical sciences university.

**Implementation Method:** The current analytical-descriptive study was conducted in 2016 in Sari University, nursing and obstetrics department, on 127 people of the nursing students who were selected based on a random sampling method. To collect the information there was made use of a three-part questionnaire the first part of which encompassed the demographic characteristics and the second part pertained to a researcher-made questionnaire for evaluating the curriculum attitudes and the third part was related to Olson's ethical climate standard questionnaire. The data were analyzed by the use of SPSS 19 and descriptive statistics methodologies and independent t-test.

**Findings:** in the present study the students' average age was  $21.56 \pm 2.19$ . 79 people of the students were women. The relationship between age and gender with curriculum attitude and ethical climate was not statistically significant ( $P > 0.05$ ). The mean score in curriculum attitude and ethical climate was reported as being optimum by the nursing students.

**Conclusion:** according to the existence of a positive and significant relationship between hospital's ethical climate and the nursing students' attitudes towards their fields of study it is hoped that the officials and the authorities in clinical

teaching and educational hospitals do their best to create more optimum ethical climate in the hospital and enhancing the positive attitudes towards the fields of study in the hospital's nursing students.

**Keywords:** ethical climate, curriculum attitude, nursing, students, Sari

**Introduction:**

Undoubtedly, the most essential and the most effective and indeed the most determining group in the advancement and growth of the developing countries is the scientific institutions and especially the universities and their students [1]. The students of the various fields of medical sciences studies as one of the main subgroups of the Country's health care system should be educated based on the real society needs from both quality and quantity perspectives to be able to perform well being assigned with organizational positions after graduation and deal with the elimination of the society needs and problems and offer health care and treatment services. Usually, success in every work and achieving the goals requires a sort of positive attitude towards the goals and means of reaching them and the majority of the studies imply that the attitudes find a better chance of change in the university stage and as the students enter university [2]. Nurses are considered as one of the most critical sources in human resources in the medical systems and their quality of performance exerts a subtle effect on the quality of offering medical services and it can be effective on the improvement of the patients [3]. This group serves numerous and extensive roles and is in the greatest contact with the care-seekers [4].

A great deal of the studies indicates that the students' curriculum performance and the other relevant activities are not in an optimum quality level in the educational, university and academic courses. The talented university students do not take full advantage of their competencies and the university facilities are not well exploited. Most of the students do not possess scientific spirits and enough motivation and usually instead of paying attention to the enhancement of their scholar and scientific level they are more considerate of the enhancement of the education level or acquiring higher degrees. There are many factors mentioned as a cause to such a status from among which one can refer to the universities lack of success in creating and corroborating the scientific spirits, choosing inappropriate and disproportionate fields of study and personality and individual characteristics [5]. The individual's attitude towards the field of study has been described as a mixture of cognitive factors, feelings and the individual's preparation for acting upon them [6] which changes subject to real observations in the clinical environments[7, 8]. The studies performed indicate that peaceful climates free from stress and tensions in the clinical environments can increase the students' tendencies for participating

in clinical learning and consequently they can be of great effect on their educational and curriculum attitudes and perspectives [8]. This is while the nursing students are all contending that the clinical training period is one of the most stressful and tensest periods and the interpersonal relations have been reported as the main factor contributing to and exacerbating the tensions [9]. When the nurses are not supported by the extant ethical space in the hospitals in accomplishing their responsibilities and duties there is a possibility that they refrain from completing their tasks and withdraw from contributing the patients and also it is likely that the nurses be annoyed and teased by their peers to help the patients [10]. Favorable ethical climate can make the individual's attitude and perspective positive to his or her job and make the individual stay with the organization for a longer period and think less about their intentions to leave organizations and their jobs [11]. An ethical environment has definite principles based on ethical theories which help the individuals adopt better decisions in unethical situations [12]. In treatment environment the ethical climate has been defined as being comprised of the treatment personnel interpersonal relations, comfortable relations regarding taking care of the patients, supports provided by the treatment personnel and their relations with the patients and their families [13]. Since the universities have always been the source and the originators of the social evolutions in various fields and in future the students as the main pillars of the universities form the chief body of the various organizations and institutions in the society it is evident that according to the importance of the health care fields of study the students of universities should be equipped with a positive attitude towards the future of their jobs [14] and because ethical climate can influence positively the students' curriculum attitude the present study was conducted with the objective of surveying the relationship between ethical climate and curriculum attitude in the students of Sari medical sciences university.

### **Implementation method:**

The current analytical-descriptive research was conducted in 2016 in nursing and obstetrics department of Sari University on 127 people of the nursing students who were selected based on a random sampling method. The study entrance priority was given to the students who had spent at least one year schooling in their fields of study and they had not to be transfer and guest students. That was because in order for the students to be able to have a perception of the environment ethical climate they had to have spent a period of time in the hospitals. To collect the information there was made use of a questionnaire which was comprised of three parts the first part of which was related to the demographic characteristics (age, gender, curriculum semester) and the second part pertained to researcher-made questionnaire containing questions

regarding the curriculum attitude the validity of which was confirmed and its reliability was calculated based on two methods of Cronbach's alpha (0.78) and inter-cohort correlation (0.74). The questionnaire contained 25 items and the answers to each of the items were scored based on Likert's 5-point scale (1= completely disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, and 5= completely agree). In this way the questionnaire scores ranged from 25 to 125. Thus, according to the range of the scores, the mean was calculated as equal to 75 and based on this the scores below 75 were considered as indicative of negative attitude and the scores 75 and higher were regarded as positive attitude. The third part of the questionnaire was related to Olson's ethical climate standard questionnaire which contained 26 items (compiled by Olson in 1998).

The individuals' perceptions of the ethical climate prevalent in the hospital was evaluated in five levels (1= almost never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often, 5= almost always) by taking advantage of Likert's scale. In this way, the minimum total score for each individual was 26 and the maximum possible score was 130 and the scores 78 and higher were considered as positive ethical climate and the score lower than 78 indicated negative ethical climate. To better compare the results, the scores for each of the fields and the total scores produced a numeral domain ranging from 1 to 5 through being divided by the number of the items. Based on McDaniel classification, score 2.5 and higher indicates the personnel's auspicious ideas regarding the ethical climate and a positive (favorable) climate. The questionnaire was translated in 2004 by Mobasher et al and it was shown to have a reliability of more than 0.92 which is considered as being favorable and optimum [15].

To gather the data required for the study the researcher attended Sari university nursing and obstetrics department and after making the necessary coordination tasks with the faculty education vice chancellorship, firstly, the objective of the research plan was described to the students and after acquiring an oral consent the questionnaires were administered to students in various terms in sufficient number.

At the beginning of the questionnaire there was inserted a text which informed the individuals of their agreement for participating in the study project and it read "your cooperation with the current project means that you are consciously aware of your participation in the current study. Also, the information you provide remains confidential and you are not exposed to any risk of any sort". Finally, the data were analyzed by the use of SPSS 19 and descriptive statistics methods and independent t-test.

**Findings:**

In the current study the individuals' average age was  $21.56 \pm 2.19$ . 79 people (62.2%) of the students were women. The relationship between age and gender with curriculum attitude and ethical climate was not statistically significant ( $P > 0.05$ ). The mean score in the curriculum attitude and ethical climate was reported as optimum from the perspective of the nursing students.

The relationship between the curriculum attitude and the overall ethical climate and each of the ethical climate areas has been illustrated in table (1).

**Table 1: the relationship between curriculum attitude with overall ethical climate and each of its areas.**

Fields	Mean	Standard deviation	Curriculum attitude sig. level
Curriculum attitude	85.86	9.53	
Ethical climate	88.17	14.10	0.04
Peers	14.29	2.53	0.50
Patients	13.40	2.59	0.06
Managers	21.39	3.92	0.19
Physicians	19.59	4.11	0.00
Hospital	19.48	3.63	0.11

**Discussions:**

The results obtained by the current study indicated that there is a significant relationship between nursing students' perceptions of hospital's ethical climate with their attitudes towards their fields of study. This means that the more optimum the hospital's ethical climate the more positive the nursing students' attitude towards their field of study and it is worth mentioning that the results obtained by the present study conform to the results obtained in the study conducted by Abdollahzadeh et al [16]. The university students select nursing as their university majors due to different reasons. The desire to help the others, the feeling of performing something useful and job security have been pinpointed in some of the researches as the reasons for selecting nursing profession [17]. Nowadays the global lack of nursing workforce has

become a big concern and positive attitude towards nursing profession is the essential and important factor for the inclinations towards selecting this profession and remaining and striving in it. The nurses' attitudes and perspectives to their occupation can be under the influence by factors such as work conditions, interactions with the patients, peers and managers, salary rate, job security, vocational and job-related stresses [18]. Positive attitude towards one's field of study is among the important factors leading to progress and occupational enhancement and promotions, while disinterest in the one's field of study causes frustration and exhaustion regarding the continuation of the education in the field [19]. The nurses' disinterest to the work they are doing besides bringing about a decrease in the work quality can result in occurrences of irreparable harms and damages to the patients and care-seekers, causes the nurses to lose their spirits and this gradually makes the nurse indifferent and perhaps depressed [20]. The results of the study performed by Katsuki et al are also indicative of the direct effect that the nurses' attitudes towards their jobs has on job burnout, in such a manner that the nurses with more positive attitudes towards their jobs are less found to have job burnout [21]. Therefore, according to the influence that ethical climate has on the curriculum attitude it is suggested that managers and officials do their best to improve hospital's ethical climate to the maximum extent possible. The results obtained by the current study indicated that there is not a statistically significant relationship between demographic characteristics with curriculum attitudes and ethical climate which is complying with the results obtained in the study conducted by Miandoab et al [3]. The results of the studies performed in the US also indicate that the demographic variables including age, gender and education level influence the individuals' attitude and ethical behaviors and this is while none of these variables were found to be effective in respect to the ethical climate or ethical characteristics [22]. One of the most important limitations in the course of the current study was the psychological status of the staff and students at the time for completing the questionnaires which could have influenced their responding style, but it was anyhow tried to distribute the questionnaires on the right time and after providing the students with the study objectives and acquiring a conscious consent of them regarding the study plan. So, for the future research we recommend that the solutions to enhance ethical climate in the surgery rooms in the training hospitals can be a promising field of study.

### **Conclusion:**

The surgery room students' clinical experiences are among the most important experiences for preparing themselves to enter this occupation. The existence of appropriate interpersonal relations in clinical environment and preserving the

students' prestige and supporting them sufficiently have always been reported as effective factors contributing to their effective and efficient training in various studies. In the current study as well, the effect of ethical climate prevalent in the hospitals was surveyed from various aspects on the students' curriculum attitudes towards their fields of study, students who in fact are regarded as the future hospital personnel. According to the existence of a positive and significant relationship between ethical climate and nursing students' curriculum attitudes towards their fields of study it is hoped that the authorities and officials in charge of clinical training in the training hospitals apply their best of the efforts to create a more optimum ethical climate in the hospitals and the create positive attitudes in the students towards their field of study in the hospital, since the university students are considered as the workforce and intellectual capitals of a country and undertaking measures in the direction of creating a positive attitude towards the fields of study in these students guarantees their future of occupations.

### **Acknowledgement:**

The current study is a result obtained by a research plan in BA degree in nursing and obstetrics department in the University of Zahedan. We are hereby thankful to all of the participants in the study and also the officials and authorities of Zahedan medical sciences university and Sari medical sciences university whose generous and sincere helps greatly assisted us in data collection stages.

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