

Determining attitudes of a group of nurses working in the northern region of Turkey towards LGBT individuals

Soner G.^{A,B,C,D,E*}, Altay B.^{A,C,D,E,F}

Ondokuz Mayıs University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Public Health Nursing, Samsun, Turkey

A- Conception and study design; **B** - Collection of data; **C** - Data analysis; **D** - Writing the paper; **E**- Review article; **F** - Approval of the final version of the article; **G** - Other (please specify)

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The aim of this study was to determine the attitudes of a group of nurses towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals.

Materials and methods: This cross-sectional study was carried out with 358 nurses working in a hospital in the northern region of Turkey between December 2016- February 2017. The data were collected using the personal information form and the Hudson and Ricketts Homophobia Scale. Kruskal Wallis, Mann Whitney U test, Single Factor Variance Analysis, t-test and correlation were used in the analysis of the data. Ethical approval was obtained from the Clinical Research Ethics Committee of an university.

Results: The mean score of the scale of the nurses was found as 111.5±20.7. Nurses who stated that they did not want to communicate with lesbian, gay,

bisexual and transgender people were found to be more homophobic than the nurses who stated that they wanted to communicate with them. It was also found that the nurses who define themselves as 'traditional' were more homophobic than those who define themselves as 'not traditional' (p <0.05). The relationship between the nurses' knowledge towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual individuals and their attitudes towards these individuals was found to be significant similar to the previous international studies.

Conclusions: The findings of this study indicate that the level of education, the level of acquaintance with LGBT individuals and the knowledge of LGBT individuals has an effect on the homophobic attitude.

Keywords: Attitudes, homophobia, LGBT, nurses

DOI

*Corresponding author:

Güven Soner, MD, Research Assistant, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Faculty of Health Sciences
Department of Public Health Nursing, Samsun, Turkey
Tel.: (0362) 312 19 19/63 84, Fax: (0362) 457 69 26
email: guven.soner@omu.edu.tr

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INTRODUCTION

The institutional functioning and legal regulations of many countries around the world are based on the idea that each individual is heterosexual or that only male and female gender identities exist [1]. For this reason, the wrong thoughts about lesbian, gay, bisexuals and transsexuals (LGBT) emerge in the society. This situation creates discrimination, negative attitudes and practices towards these people [2]. Because of this negative environment, people whose sexual orientation and/or gender identity are different from the majority of society may face difficulties in using their health rights [3].

Health workers are individuals within the heteronormative system. Therefore, they are able to act with the idea that the only sexual orientation is heterosexuality or gender identity are only female and male [4]. Heteronormative media, heteronormative occupational training and heteronormative workplace cause the development of homophobic attitudes of health workers. In addition, negative attitudes towards LGBTs are influenced by conservative thought, religiosity and lack of personal contact with LGBT individuals [5]. LGBT individuals who apply to health institutions for health services and communicate with health workers are exposed to discrimination due to the homophobic attitudes of both the institutional structure and health workers [6]. Discrimination and negative attitudes prevent LGBT individuals from accessing health services [7].

There are studies from different countries showing the presence of homophobic attitudes in occupational groups that have a significant share in health service delivery [8-10]. In a study conducted in Turkey, some LGBT individuals who exposed to hate crimes indicated that they saw the negative attitude of health professionals in the healthcare institutions [11]. These attitudes may cause LGBT individuals to show avoidance behavior in their health care needs [12].

Nurses have a significant share in the provision of health services. According to the results of studies from different countries investigating the attitudes of nurses towards LGBT individuals, it has been shown that nurses have negative attitudes towards these individuals [13-21]. However, in Turkey, there are several review articles on the health of LGBT individuals. In addition, there were no studies other than a few studies showing the attitudes of nursing students towards homosexuals [22-24].

The aim of this study was to determine the attitude of a group of nurses working in a hospital in the northern region Turkey towards LGBT individuals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Aims

The aim of this study was to determine the attitudes of a group of nurses towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals.

Sample

This cross-sectional study is carried out in a hospital in the northern region of Turkey between December 2016-February 2017. The study population is 446 nurses working in the hospital. No sample selection was made in the study. Within the scope of the study, it was planned to take all the nurses. However, the study was completed with 358 nurses (80.2% of the population) who accepted to participate in the study.

Data Collection

The data were obtained by using "Personal Information Form" and "Hudson and Ricketts Homophobia Scale". Form and scale were filled in nurses rooms at nurses' rest hours by nurses. The average response time was 25-30 minutes.

Personal Information Form

The form was prepared by the researchers as a result of the literature review and was composed of 17 closed-ended questions that question the socio-demographic characteristics of nurses, their opinions and attitudes towards LGBT individuals [25-27].

Hudson and Ricketts Homophobia Scale

The Hudson and Ricketts Homophobia Scale (HRHS) consists of 25 items and was developed by Hudson and Ricketts (1980) to measure attitudes towards homosexual and bisexual individuals. In this study, the Turkish version of the scale, which was adapted by Sakallı and Uğurlu (2001), was used. The reliability of the original scale is Cronbach $\alpha = 0.90$. It is found Cronbach $\alpha = 0.94$ in the Turkish version [28,29]. The lowest score of the scale is 24 points and the highest score is 144 points.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval (B.30.2.ODM.0.20.08/457-499) was obtained from the Clinical Research Ethics Committee of Ondokuz Mayıs University. Verbal, informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Statistical analyses

Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20.0 was used for data analysis. Kruskal Wallis, Mann Whitney U test, Single Factor Variance Analysis, t test and correlation were used in the analysis of the data. Statistical significance was accepted as $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

In this section, results of the analysis of the obtained data are presented. The results of Hudson and Ricketts Homophobia Scale in this study are presented in Table 1. It was found Cronbach α is 0.90 in this study. Table 2 shows the descriptive

characteristics of nurses. 92.5% of the nurses included in the study were female. 78.8% of nurses are bachelor's degree, 10.6% are associate degree. It was found that 81% of nurses spent their lives in the province and 43.9% of nurses worked as nurses for 11 years and above. 77.4% of the nurses stated that they have traditional attitudes.

Table 1. Hudson and Ricketts Homophobia Scale Results

N	Max.	Min.	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
358	144	29	115.5	20.7	0.90

Table 2. Descriptive characteristics of nurses (n=358)

Variables	n	%
Gender		
Male	27	7.5
Female	331	92.5
Educational background		
High-school graduate	19	5.3
Associate degree	38	10.6
Bachelor's degree	282	78.8
Master's degree	19	5.3
Background of living conditions		
Village	11	3.1
Town	57	15.9
Province	290	81.0
Number of years worked as a nurse		
1-5	93	26.0
6-10	108	30.2
11 and over	157	43.9
Thoughts and life style		
Traditional	277	77.4
Not Traditional	81	22.6

Table 3. Descriptive characteristics of nurses (n=358)

Variables	n	%
Gender		
Male	27	7.5
Female	331	92.5
Educational background		
High-school graduate	19	5.3
Associate degree	38	10.6
Bachelor's degree	282	78.8
Master's degree	19	5.3
Background of living conditions		
Village	11	3.1
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Thoughts and life style		
Traditional	277	77.4
Not Traditional	81	22.6

Table 3 shows the awareness of nurses about LGBT individuals. The ones who stated that they did not have a LGBT acquaintance were 85.5% and those who stated that they had very close acquaintance were 4.2%. 70.1% of nurses who stated

that they did not have enough knowledge about LGBT individuals and 80.7% of nurses who stated that there was no mention about LGBT individuals in their nursing education.

Table 4. The awareness of nurses about LGBT individuals (n=358)

Variables	n	%
Having LGBT acquaintance status		
Not having	306	85.5
Having little familiarity	28	7.8
Having a middle level of familiarity	9	2.5
Having a very close acquaintance	15	4.2
Having enough knowledge about LGBT individuals		
Yes	107	29.9
No	251	70.1
The mention of LGBT issues in nursing education		
Mentioned	69	19.3
Not mentioned	289	80.7

According to Table 4, it is found that the nurses who stated that what comes to mind with the concept of 'LGBT' were 'sexual orientation' were 52.8%, those who stated 'disease' were 21.5% and 'heresy, crime, sin' were 21.2%. The rate of nurses who stated that they wanted to give care to LGBT

patients was 63.7% and the rate of nurses who stated that they wanted to communicate with LGBT patients was 89.1%.

Table 5. Some attitudes of nurses towards LGBT individuals (n=358)

Variables	n	%
What reminds the concept of 'LGBT'		
Disease	77	21.5
Deviance, crime, sin	76	21.2
Sexual orientation	189	52.8
Having no idea	16	4.5
Having desire to give care to LGBT patients		
Yes	228	63.7
No	130	36.3
Having desire to communicate with LGBT patients		
Yes	319	89.1
No	39	10.9

The data of the Homophobe Scale scores of the nurses and their characteristics are compared in Table 5. Homophobia Scale scores according to the gender, it is seen that the males received 112.74±17.44 and the females received 106.69±20.06. The relationship between genders was not significant according to Homophobia Scale scores (t=1.518; p> 0.05).

When the Homophobia Scale scores of the nurses are examined, it is seen that the High-school graduate are the the highest (110.84±21.55) and those with associate degrees are the lowest (97.26±23.10). Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square test revealed that at least one of the groups had a difference (KW=10.530; SD=3; p <0.05). Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the differences. As a result, the difference between high-school

graduate and associate degree (p=0.017) and associate degree and bachelor's degree were found to be significant (p= 0.003) (Table 5).

According to the place where nurses spend most of their lives and the year they work as a nurse, the average score of Homophobia Scale were not statistically significant (p> 0.05).

Homophobia Scale scores are compared with the traditional status of nurses. The mean score of the nurses who defined themselves as 'not traditional' was 100.59±22.57, whereas the score of those who defined themselves as 'traditional' is 109.07±18.69. In the statistical comparison, it was found that the relationship is significant (t = 3.420; p <0.05).

Homophobia Scale scores of nurses according to their awareness of LGBT individuals

are shown in Table 6. The mean score of the nurses who had no LGBT acquaintance (108.56± 18.41) was the highest and the mean score of those who were acquainted in the middle level (83.22±28.18) was the lowest. Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square test revealed that at least one of the groups had a difference (KW=10.522; SD=3; p=0.015). According to the Mann-Whitney U test, the difference between the ones who had no LGBT acquaintance and ones who had middle level of familiarity, those who had very close acquaintance LGBT individuals and those who had little

familiarity LGBT individuals was statistically significant (p <0.05).

In the comparison of the average scores of Homophobia Scale in terms of whether nurses have sufficient knowledge about LGBT individuals; the mean score of the nurses (101.37±22.35) was lower than those who thought that they had sufficient knowledge about LGBT individuals. The difference between the two variables was found to be statistically significant (t=-3.645; p<0.001) (Table 6).

Table 6. The relationship between descriptive characteristics of nurses and HRHS score of nurses

Variables	HRHS Score X±SD	Statistics	p-value
Gender		t	
Male	112.74±17.44	1.518	0.130
Female	106.69±20.06		
Educational background		KW	
High-school graduate	110.84±21.55	10.530	0.015
Associate's degree	108.41±19.16	SD=3	
Bachelor's degree	97.26±23.10		
Master's degree	104.47±17.93		
Background of living conditions		KW	
Village	106.54±17.06	0.366	0.947
Town	108.68±17.57	SD=3	
Province	106.00±22.48		
Number of years worked as a nurse		KW	
1-5	104.67±22.02	2.095	0.351
6-10	109.80±17.80	SD=2	
11 and over	106.79±19.89		
Thoughts and life style		t	
Traditional	109.07±18.69	3.420	0.001
Not Traditional	100.59±22.57		

Table 7. The relationship between awareness of nurses about LGBT individuals and HRHS score of nurses

Variables	HRHS Score X±SD	Statistics	p-value
Having LGBT acquaintance status		KW-X²	
Not having	108.56±18.41	10.522	0.015
Having little familiarity	103.42±21.98	Sd=3	
Having a middle level of familiarity	83.22±28.18		
Having a very close acquaintance	99.66±29.10		
Having enough knowledge about LGBT individuals		t	
Yes	101.37±22.35	-3.645	0.000
No	109.61±18.28		
The mention of LGBT issues in nursing education		t	
Mentioned	99.33±23.15	-3.693	0.000
Not mentioned	109.02±18.63		

Homophobia Scale scores of nurses who indicated that LGBT individuals were mentioned in nursing education were 99.33±23.15 and nurses who

stated that they were not mentioned were 109.02±18.63. It was found that nurses who stated that they did not mention LGBT individuals in

nursing education were more homophobic than those mentioned. The difference between the two groups was significant ($t=-3.69$; $p < 0.05$).

Table 7 shows the relationship between some attitudes of nurses towards LGBT individuals and HRHS score of nurses. It was found that the Homophobia Scale mean score of the nurses who stated that the nurses who stated that what comes to mind with the concept of 'LGBT' were 'sin' were the highest (117.27 ± 14.36), and the mean score of the nurses who stated that LGBT was 'sexual orientation' was the lowest (102.15 ± 21.62). The difference between the groups was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Kruskal-Wallis Chi-Square test revealed that at least one of the groups had a difference ($KW=31.186$; $SD=3$; $p= 0.000$). The intergroup relationship was compared with the Mann Whitney U test. The relationship between the ones who stated that the concept of LGBT as 'sin' and 'disease' was significant ($p < 0.05$). According to this, it was found that the nurses who stated what comes to mind with the concept of LGBT were 'sin' were more

homophobic. It is found that nurses who state that LGBT is a sexual orientation were less homophobic. The relationship between the nurses who stated that the concept of LGBT was 'sin' and nurses who stated that 'sexual orientation' was significant ($p < 0.05$).

According to Homophobia Scale mean scores of nurses who want to give care to LGBT individuals; the mean score of the nurses who stated that they wanted to give care to LGBT individuals (101.40 ± 20.17) was lower. The difference between the two groups was found statistically significant ($t=-7.810$; $p < 0.05$) (Table 7).

It was found that the mean score of the nurses who stated that they wanted to communicate with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals was 105.75 ± 19.98 , the mean score of the nurses who stated that they did not want to communicate with LGBT individuals was 118.56 ± 15.32 . The difference between these two groups was significant in the comparison ($t = -3.862$; $p < 0.05$) (Table 8).

Table 8. The relationship between some attitudes of nurses towards LGBT individuals and HRHS score of nurses

Variables	HRHS Score X±SD	Statistics	p-value
What reminds the concept of 'LGBT'			
		KW	
Disease	109.98±15.01	31.186	0.000
Sin	117.27±14.36	SD=3	
Sexual orientation	104.50±23.01		
Having no idea	102.15±21.62		
Having the desire to give care to LGBT patients			
		t	
Having	101.40±20.17	-7.810	0.000
Not having	117.23±14.89		
Having the desire to communicate with LGBT patients			
		t	
Having	105.75±19.98	-3.862	0.000
Not having	118.56±15.32		

DISCUSSION

In this study, HRHS scores of men were 112.74 ± 17.44 and women were 106.69 ± 20.06 . It was found that the mean score of the nurses was found to be high according to these results. Similarly to our findings, nurses do not have a positive attitude towards homosexual and bisexual individuals in studies conducted in different countries [15,16,18,19,21]. It can be said that taboos, which exist in different countries towards LGBT individuals, are also effective on nurses.

It was found that those with high school graduates were more homophobic than those with associate degree and those with an associate degree were found to be more homophobic than those with bachelor's degree in this study, high school graduates are more homophobic than those with associate degree and those with associate degree are more

homophobic than those with bachelor's degree. Different studies indicate a relationship between education level and homophobic attitudes [15,21]. These results indicate that there is a negative relationship between education level and homophobic attitude. It can be said that the increase in the level of education gives people an awareness of LGBT individuals.

It is stated that there is a relationship between traditional values and negative attitudes towards LGBT individuals [5]. In previous studies, nurses who defined themselves as religious have been shown to have a negative attitude towards LGBT individuals [20,21]. In our study, it was found that nurses who defined themselves as 'traditional' were more homophobic than those who defined 'not traditional'. This study which is conducted in northern region that has traditional values in Turkey shows that nurses have a professional attitude

towards LGBT people. It was also found that the mean score of the nurses who stated that the nurses who stated that what comes to mind with the concept of 'LGBT' were 'sin' were the highest, and the mean score of the nurses who stated that LGBT was 'sexual orientation' was the lowest. There are studies that have found a relationship between misconceptions of nurses about LGBT individuals and their attitudes towards these individuals [8,30]. The notes written by the two nurses who did not agree to participate in the study were important in terms of demonstrating that this issue still exists as a taboo. "I don't want to complete this survey, I'm disgusted.", "I did not like the subject of this survey did not get any pleasure, more determining and useful topics can be selected."

In this study, it was found that nurses who have no LGBT acquaintance were more homophobic than ones have LGBT acquaintance ($p < 0.015$). Different studies are similar to our findings [14,15,20,21]. Having an LGBT acquaintance can create an opportunity for the individual to get to know LGBT individuals, empathy with them, have knowledge about sexual orientations and gender identities. This may contribute to the reduction or elimination of the negative prejudice against LGBT individuals.

In this study, it was found that the nurses who thought that they did not have enough information about LGBT individuals were found to be more homophobic than the nurses who thought they had sufficient knowledge ($p < 0.001$). In addition, it is seen that nurses who stated that LGBT individuals are mentioned in their nursing education are less homophobic than nurses who stated that LGBT individuals are not mentioned. Studies conducted in different countries are in parallel with these findings [13,17,18,31,32]. It can be interpreted that knowledge about LGBT individuals decreases prejudice towards these individuals. If the nurses do not have scientific knowledge about LGBT, they are affected by the general attitude of the society.

In this study, it was found that the willingness of nurses to give nursing care to LGBT individuals with positive attitudes towards LGBT individuals was more positive ($p < 0.001$). Similar to different studies, the findings show that LGBT individuals are a taboo for nurses and affect caregiving behaviors for these individuals [13,15,21,33,34]. This may be because nurses who have scientific knowledge for LGBT individuals have reduced prejudice towards these individuals and therefore do not have any reluctance to provide care for these individuals.

Although there is no clear study of the population of LGBT individuals in society, it is certain that nurses will somehow communicate with these individuals in their lives [35]. Even if this is a possibility, it is the ethical responsibility of the nurses to know these individuals and to know their

needs for health services [36]. In this study, it was found that nurses who want to communicate with LGBT people are less homophobic than nurses who do not want to communicate. From this result, it can be interpreted that nurses' ethical awareness is low.

Study limitations

In this study, the difference in the living area of the sample group and the fact that the sample is mostly female can be considered as a limitation for the study. This research was carried out with nurses working in a hospital in Turkey's northern region. This situation restricts generalizability.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that the level of education, the level of acquaintance with LGBT individuals and the knowledge of LGBT individuals has an effect on the homophobic attitude. In addition, it was found that nurses who want to give care to LGBT individuals and communicate with LGBT individuals are less homophobic. For this reason, it is important to provide trainings that will raise awareness about LGBT individuals in nursing undergraduate education and in-service trainings of institutions for nurses. Future research is needed to validate and expand our findings in more diverse and representative nurses.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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ORCID

Güven, Soner: 0000-0002-4742-3567
Birsen, Altay: 0000-0001-5823-1117

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