Article

# Evaluation of Effectiveness of the Hidden Curriculum in Nursing Students: East Turkey

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## Abstract

This study was conducted to evaluate the hidden curriculum in nursing education. This cross-sectional, descriptive study was carried out among 235 nursing students. The "Student Information Form" and "Hidden Curriculum Assessment Scale in Nursing Education" were used to collect data from the participants. The mean scores that the students obtained from the hidden curriculum assessment scale, were 138.54±23.27. The variables, such as the faculty the students attended, whether they have chosen the profession willingly (p=0.000), the sufficiency of the professional education of the school (p=0.000), and whether they are happy with the school (p=0.000), affected their perceptions of the hidden curriculum. The students' perceptions of the hidden curriculum of the institution were at a moderate level. In our study, those who considered the education at the school sufficient, those who chose the nursing profession willingly, and those who were happy with the school, obtained higher scores on the hidden curriculum assessment scale. In order to increase the quality of their graduates, higher education institutions that provide nursing education should aim to create and develop the hidden curriculum of the institution. Thus, the informal hidden curriculum, together with students' needs and other creative aspects, can be recognised and integrated into the formal curriculum. In addition, interviews can be done with students to identify the factors that are making them unhappy, so that these aspects can be interrogated, in detail, to bring about changes to create a positive school climate.

**Keywords:** nursing education curriculum; nursing education; hidden curriculum; nursing students; nursing

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## Introduction

The nursing curriculum is defined as the integration of philosophical approaches, courses, learning-teaching techniques, methods used in practice, the learning climate, and methods for assessing students (Shanthi and Angeline 2015, 76). The nursing curriculum is not just a content plan. The nursing curriculum is a situation related to what should be in the teaching plan, as well as the ways in which nurse academics teach the plan in the curriculum (Frenk et al. 2010, 1924). Nursing academics try to prepare students to be able to make decisions in changing situations and inspire students to embrace life-long learning (Karimi et al. 2014, 3; Shanthi and Angeline 2015, 76). The most important duty in the nursing profession is to care for patients. The quality of the care given by nurses depends on the nursing education they receive from the nursing education institution and the exposure they have to different clinical experiences in the nursing profession (Karimi et al. 2014, 2; Kim-Godwin et al. 2010, 244). The aim of nursing education is to enable students to learn the necessary information, to gain practical skills and undertake the social responsibilities to perform their professional nursing role (Kim-Godwin, Baek, and Wynd. 2010, 245).

Educators, generally, regard education as a structured process that is plain and linear, and define the process as a situation that creates standard results (O'Donnell 2014, 5). However, education is innate and it has a complicated definition. Even if everything is clearly defined in the curriculum, the behaviours expected from the nursing students who graduate, may not be sufficiently developed, because there is also the hidden curriculum that affects everything written in the curriculum. During the process of preparing students for the profession, the unplanned and unwritten hidden curriculum should not be ignored (Allan, Smith, and Driscoll 2011, 848; Karimi et al. 2014, 5). The hidden curriculum is an ongoing process and it conveys hidden messages to students about values, attitudes and principles. This curriculum comes about through the assessment of unexpected, unintentional interactions between educators and students (Hafler et al. 2011, 441; Kentli 2009, 84). The hidden curriculum also includes non-verbal signals and messages between the educators and students (Allan et al. 2011, 848; Balmer et al. 2011, 348). The hidden curriculum includes a series of unwritten social and cultural values, rules, assumptions and expectations (Wear and Skillicorn 2009, 453). In addition, the hidden curriculum has a much stronger effect on the behaviours of individuals, compared to the formal curriculum (Wear and Skillicorn 2009, 453).

Research has found that educational institutions and academics convey their views, beliefs, values and expectations to students explicitly or implicitly during the education process (Allan et al. 2011, 850; Brammer 2006, 698; Jafree et al. 2015, 2). It has been observed that during their education, nursing students are very much impressed by the faculty they are studying in; the academics, the nurses supporting clinical education and nurse managers (Jafree et al. 2015, 2). It is difficult to say that these effects are always positive. Many students may be adversely affected by the hidden curriculum (Brammer 2006, 698; Jafree et al. 2015, 2). Inconsistency between the planned and hidden

curriculum can place a psychological burden on students (Lamiani et al. 2011, 990). Therefore, the educational process, in which learning and teaching take place, should be examined holistically. Since the hidden curriculum emerges with the feelings, behaviours and attitudes that occur through teacher-student-school interactions, it is very important to evaluate it in every educational institution (Ozolins, Hall, and Peterson 2008, 608).

The number of studies conducted in Turkey about the hidden curriculum in institutions providing nursing education, is limited. (Akcakoca and Orgun 2020, 2). The present study was conducted to examine the opinions of nursing students studying at an institution, in a city, in the east of Turkey, to learn about the hidden curriculum in their faculty and to raise teachers' and managers' awareness of the hidden curriculum as it manifests in this school and faculty. It is thought that the study will contribute to studies conducted to increase the quality of nursing education in higher education, and to provide guidance to academics in recognising and evaluating their hidden curriculum in order to form a valid resource for making the required changes.

## Methods

### Study Design and Setting

This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted with second-, third- and fourth-year nursing students studying at the health sciences faculty of a state university, between 30 October 2019 and 10 February 2020. The study was carried out in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration. Before the study was conducted, the approval was obtained from the Clinical Research Ethics Committee of Erzincan Binali Yildirim University in Turkey (dated 8 October 2019, numbered 33216249-604.01.02-E.48492).

### Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria

All the students, except for the first-year students, who agreed to participate in the study, were included in the study. The first-year students were not included in the study, because they had just arrived at school and, thus, had not yet interacted with their teachers and did not know the environment of the school well.

### Sampling and Study Respondents

The population of the study consisted of 265 nursing students (98 second-year students; 95 third-year students; and 72 fourth-year students). Thirty of these 265 students were excluded from the study, because of missing/incomplete responses to survey questions. Therefore, 235 students (89 second-year students; 82 third-year students; and 64 fourth-year students) constituted the sample of the study.

### Data Collection Tool

The data were collected through the application of the "Student Information Form" and "Hidden Curriculum Assessment Scale in Nursing Education" (HCASNE), which the

students were asked to complete. The "Student Information Form" includes seven itemised questions that relate to their socio-demographic characteristics, communication with academics in the nursing school, the education they receive at school and whether they are happy with the school. The HCASNE scale was developed by Akcakoca and Orgun (2020). Permission was obtained from the authors who developed the scale before using the scale. The lowest and highest possible scores one can get on the overall scale and its sub-dimensions are as follows: 43 and 215 on the "overall" scale, 21 and 105 on the "school climate" sub-dimension, 12 and 60 on the "professional attainments" sub-dimension, and 10 and 50 on the "student-teacher-school interaction" sub-dimension, respectively. The higher the score obtained on the scale, the more consistent the hidden curriculum is with the institution's formal curriculum and the better it contributes to the development of the desired characteristics in the students (Akcakoca and Orgun 2020, 3).

### Validity and Reliability

The HCASNE includes 43 items and three sub-dimensions. The school climate sub-dimension of the scale included 21 items. Its Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was 0.913. The professional attainments sub-dimension of the scale includes 12 items. Its Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was 0.888. The student-teacher-school interaction sub-dimension of the scale included 10 items. Its Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was 0.765. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient value of the total scale was 0.912 (Akcakoca and Orgun 2020, 3). In our study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was 0.937 for the "school climate" sub-dimension, 0.943 for the "professional attainments" sub-dimension, 0.897 for the "student-teacher-school interaction" sub-dimension, and 0.905 for the "overall" scale.

### Data Collection

The data were collected by the researcher at a time when the students were available and when they did not have classes. During data collection, the respondents were not given the questionnaire to fill in at their convenience; this was to avoid influence from co-respondents. Rather, the researcher engaged with each respondent individually, for about 10–15 minutes, to complete the questionnaire, and collected it immediately.

### Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 20. 0) was used to analyse the study data. Statistical significance was established at a P value of $\leq 0.05$. The result of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test was used to find out whether the data were normally distributed ($p>0.05$) and it demonstrated that the data were normally distributed. While the descriptive methods (number, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum value) were used for the statistical analysis of the study data, the t-test was used to compare the difference between the mean scores in the independent groups. The one-way ANOVA was used in the comparison of three or more independent groups, whereas Tukey's post-hoc test was used to determine which of the groups were

different. The Pearson correlation test was used to measure the strength of the association between the two variables.

## Results

The results of the socio-demographic characteristics of the students are given in table 1. A total of 235 questionnaires were completed by the respondents. As shown in table 1, the mean age of the respondents was 20.98±1.21 years; 71.5% were women; 37.9% were second-year students; 48.9% had a moderate level of academic achievement; 42.1% chose nursing because it was easy to find a job as a nurse; 41.7% thought that the professional education at the school they were studying in was moderately sufficient; 42.2% had a moderate level of communication with academics; and 81.3% were not happy with the school they were studying in (table 1).

**Table 1:** Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in the study (N=235)

| | | n | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Women | 168 | 71.5 |
| | Men | 67 | 28.5 |
| Year at school | Second year | 89 | 37.9 |
| | Third year | 82 | 34.9 |
| | Fourth year | 64 | 27.2 |
| Level of academic achievement at the school the students were studying in | Very good | 11 | 4.7 |
| | Good | 94 | 40.0 |
| | Moderate | 115 | 48.9 |
| | Bad | 15 | 6.4 |
| Factors affecting the students' choice of the department they were studying | Their own free will | 90 | 38.3 |
| | By chance | 14 | 6.0 |
| | Job opportunity | 99 | 42.1 |
| | Family request | 23 | 9.8 |
| | Other | 9 | 3.8 |
| Students' sufficiency level of the vocational education at the school they were studying | Very sufficient | 13 | 5.5 |
| | Sufficient | 72 | 30.6 |
| | Moderately sufficient | 98 | 41.7 |
| | Insufficient | 52 | 22.1 |
| Level of communication between the students and academics | Very good | 18 | 7.7 |
| | Good | 95 | 40.3 |
| | Moderate | 99 | 42.2 |
| | Bad | 23 | 9.8 |
| Being happy with the school the students were studying | Yes | 44 | 18.7 |
| | No | 191 | 81.3 |
| Age | ($\bar{x}$ ±SD) | 20.98±1.21 | |

Descriptive statistics regarding the students' hidden curriculum assessment scale for nursing education (HCASNE) and its sub-dimensions are given in table 2. The mean

scores the students obtained on the "overall HCASNE" (138.54±23.27), and its "school climate" (57.87±10.97), "professional attainments" (45.30±10.62) and "student-teacher-school interaction" (35.36±8.78) sub-dimensions were at a moderate level. According to these results, the highest mean score was obtained on the "school climate" sub-dimension (57.87±10.97) (table 2).

**Table 2**: Descriptive statistics of students' hidden curriculum assessment scale for nursing education and sub-dimensions (N=235)

| | **N** | **X̄** | **SD** | **Min** | **Max** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School climate | 235 | 57.87 | 10.97 | 33 | 86 |
| Professional attainments | 235 | 45.30 | 10.62 | 12 | 60 |
| Student-teacher-school interaction | 235 | 35.36 | 8.78 | 10 | 50 |
| HCASNE total | 235 | 138.54 | 23.27 | 79 | 189 |

X̄: Mean
S.D: Standard deviation
Min: Minimum
Max: Maximum

The association between the students' demographic characteristics and the hidden curriculum assessment scale in nursing education and its sub-dimensions is presented in table 3. No statistically significant correlation was found between the students' ages and the mean scores for the "overall HCASNE" and its "school climate," "professional attainments" sub-dimensions ($p>0.05$). However, there was a statistically significant correlation between the students' ages and the mean score for the "student-teacher-school interaction" sub-dimension ($r=0.131$; $p=0.044$). According to data presented, the mean score for the "student-teacher-school interaction" sub-dimension increased as the participants' age increased.

There was no statistically significant correlation between the students' gender and the mean score for the "student-teacher-school interaction" sub-dimension ($p>0.05$). However, there was a statistically significant correlation between the students' gender and the mean score for the "professional attainment" sub-dimension ($t=2.567$; $p=0.011$). In this regard, it was determined that the female students' "professional attainment" mean scores were higher than were those of the male students.

There was no statistically significant correlation between the students' year at school and their mean scores for the "overall HCASNE" and its "professional attainment" and "student-teacher-school interaction" sub-dimensions ($p>0.05$). There was a statistically significant correlation between the students' "year at school" and their mean score for the "school climate" sub-dimension ($F=4.764$; $p=0.009$). In this regard, it was determined that the fourth-year students obtained a higher mean score on the "school climate" sub-dimension than did the second- and third-year students.

There was no statistically significant correlation between the students' academic achievement and their mean scores for the "overall HCASNE" and its "student-teacher-school interaction" sub-dimension ($p>0.05$). There was a statistically significant correlation between the students' academic achievement and their mean score for the "professional attainment" sub-dimension ($F=2.708$; $p=0.046$). In this regard, the students whose academic achievement was low, obtained a lower mean score on the "professional attainment" sub-dimension than did the students whose academic achievement was moderate or good

There was a statistically significant correlation between the factors affecting the students' career choices and the mean scores they obtained on the "overall HCASNE" ($F=7.498$; $p=0.000$), and its "school climate" ($F=3.913$; $p=0.004$), "professional attainment" ($F=10.568$; $p=0.000$), and "student-teacher-school interaction" ($F=2.863$; $p=0.024$) sub-dimensions. In this regard, it was determined that the students who chose the profession willingly, obtained higher scores on the "overall HCASNE" and its "school climate," "professional attainment," "student-teacher-school interaction" sub-dimensions, than did the students who chose the profession for different reasons.

There was a statistically significant correlation between the students' assessment of the professional education given in the school they were studying and the mean scores they obtained on the "overall HCASNE" ($F=7.498$; $p=0.000$), and its "school climate" ($F=3.913$; $p=0.004$), "professional attainment" ($F=10.568$; $p=0.000$), "student-teacher-school interaction" ($F=2.863$; $p=0.024$) sub-dimensions. In this regard, it was determined that the students who thought the professional education given at the school was "very sufficient," obtained higher mean scores on the "overall HCASNE" and its sub-dimensions, than did those who thought the education was "sufficient," "moderate" or "insufficient."

There was a statistically significant correlation between the students being happy with the school they were studying at and the mean scores they obtained on the "overall HCASNE" ($F=6.471$; $p=0.000$) and its "school climate" ($F=7.061$; $p=0.000$), "professional attainment" ($F=5.191$; $p=0.000$) and "student-teacher-school interaction" ($F=2.940$; $p=0.004$) sub-dimensions. According to this, it was determined that the students who were happy with the school, obtained higher mean scores, on all the sub-dimensions, than did the students who were not happy with the school (table 3).

**Table 3:** The association between students' demographic characteristics and Hidden Curriculum Assessment Scale in Nursing Education and sub-dimensions

| | **School climate** | **Professional attainments** | **Student-teacher-school interaction** | **HCASNE total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **X̄ ±SD** | **X̄ ±SD** | **X̄ ±SD** | **X̄ ±SD** |
| Age | r=0.050<br>p=0.449 | r=0.058<br>p=0.378 | r=0.131<br>p=0.044 | r=0.047<br>p=0.477 |
| Gender | | | | |
| Women | 57.97±10.41 | 46.41±10.51 | 35.66±8.64 | 140.05±22.18 |
| Men | 57.61±12.35 | 42.52±10.44 | 34.61±9.13 | 134.74±25.60 |
| t/p | t=0.229<br>p=0.819 | t=2.567<br>p=0.011 | t=0.831<br>p=0.407 | t=1.585<br>p=0.114 |
| Year at school | | | | |
| Second year (1) | 55.25±10.89 | 44.69±11.61 | 36.41±9.69 | 141.47±25.57 |
| Third year (2) | 57.76±8.25 | 44.80±10.52 | 35.36±8.29 | 135.42±23.51 |
| Fourth year (3) | 60.35±12.23 | 46.79±9.23 | 33.90±7.92 | 138.46±19.04 |
| F/p | F=4.764<br>p=0.009 | F=0.867<br>p=0.422 | F=1.527<br>p=0.219 | F=1.445<br>p=0.238 |
| Difference* | 3>21 | - | - | - |
| Level of academic achievement at the school students were attending | | | | |
| Very good (1) | 58.63±12.29 | 47.36±10.91 | 35.36±7.03 | 141.36±20.41 |
| Good (2) | 59.37±10.74 | 46.21±10.18 | 35.54±8.95 | 141.12±23.15 |
| Moderate (3) | 57.4710.39 | 45.33±9.65 | 35.10±8.51 | 137.92±22.22 |
| Bad (4) | 50.93±13.81 | 37.86±16.88 | 36.26±11.36 | 125.06±30.45 |
| F/p | F=2.708<br>p=0.046 | F=2.886<br>p=0.036 | F=0.098<br>p=0.961 | F=2.176<br>p=0.092 |
| Difference* | 4<23 | 4<23 | - | - |
| Factors affecting the students' choice of the department they were studying in | | | | |
| Their own free will (1) | 61.27±11.08 | 50.35±7.36 | 36.74±8.66 | 148.37±21.79 |
| By chance (2) | 54.35±12.35 | 39.42±14.96 | 40.07±8.56 | 133.85±26.65 |
| Job opportunity (3) | 56.05±10.06 | 43.27±10.34 | 33.64±8.72 | 132.96±21.65 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family request (4) | 54.56±9.37 | 39.86±11.36 | 33.82±8.15 | 128.26±20.46 |
| Other (5) | 57.77±14.22 | 40.22±12.46 | 37.11±8.83 | 135.11±26.17 |
| F/p | F=3.913<br>p=0.004 | F=10.568<br>p=0.000 | F=2.863<br>p=0.024 | F=7.498<br>p=0.000 |
| Difference* | 1>234 | 1>234 | 1>234 | 1>234 |
| Students' sufficiency level of the vocational education at the school they were studying in | | | | |
| Very sufficient (1) | 66.94±10.59 | 51.83±5.75 | 38.00±10.86 | 156.77±22.86 |
| Sufficient (2) | 61.74±10.45 | 47.16±9.47 | 36.87±8.05 | 145.78±21.42 |
| Moderately sufficient (3) | 55.54±8.26 | 44.67±9.75 | 34.20±7.88 | 134.42±18.98 |
| Insufficient (4) | 44.26±8.28 | 35.04±14.32 | 31.82±11.81 | 111.13±20.49 |
| F/p | F=3.913<br>p=0.004 | F=10.568<br>p=0.000 | F=2.863<br>p=0.024 | F=7.498<br>p=0.000 |
| Difference* | 1>234 | 1>234 | 1>234 | 1>234 |
| Being happy with the school the students were studying in | | | | |
| Yes | 67.45±10.40 | 51.15±7.60 | 38.81±8.73 | 157.43±20.12 |
| No | 55.66±9.88 | 43.95±10.77 | 34.57±8.62 | 134.19±21.77 |
| t/p | t=7.061<br>p=0.000 | t=5.191<br>p=0.000 | t=2.940<br>p=0.004 | t=6.471<br>p=0.000 |

$\bar{X}$: Mean
SD: Standard Deviation
t: Student T-test
F: One-way ANOVA
p: Significance level
*: Tukey's post-hoc test

## Discussion

This study was conducted to find out how students evaluated the hidden curriculum in nursing education. The mean scores that students obtained on the HCASNE were 138.54±23.27. When the maximum score that one can get from the scale is taken into consideration (215 points), it was found that the students had a moderate score, in general. The results obtained, as a result of the analysis of the study data, were discussed in light of the related literature.

The mean age of the students in our study was 20.98±1.21 years. As the students' age increased, so did the mean score they obtained on the "student-teacher-school interaction" sub-dimension ($r=0.131$; $p=0.044$). The "student-teacher-school interaction" sub-dimension questions whether teachers display attitudes that force students to adopt their (their teachers') thoughts, and whether they discriminate between students' gender or race and the hierarchical attitude of the school management. The mean score that the students obtained on this sub-dimension was at a moderate level (35.36±8.78). It is stated that the hidden curriculum has positive effects on teaching different behaviours proven for each age (Clynes and Raftery 2008; Karimi et al. 2014, 4). Studies have shown that one should know the institution, its functioning and its employees, if he or she is to comment on the hidden curriculum (Akbulut and Aslan 2016, 171; Karimi et al. 2014, 4). The increase in students' age and the more extensive amount of time they have spent in the school, cause them to have more ideas about "student-teacher-school interaction" at the school. It is also known that their awareness and maturity have also increased, with the increase in their age (Jafree et al. 2015, 5; Akbulut and Aslan 2016, 171). Accordingly, it is thought that students, who mature with increasing age, develop more positive attitudes towards "student-teacher-school interaction."

The female students in our study obtained a higher mean score on the "professional attainments" sub-dimension, than did the male students ($p<0.05$). The mean score that the students obtained on the "professional attainments" sub-dimension was at a moderate level (45.30±10.62). The "professional attainments" sub-dimension examines whether students think that the nursing profession is valuable, whether they are proud of the nursing profession, and whether they can establish good communication with patients and patients' relatives, empathise with them and respect them. Although the number of males in the nursing profession is increasing, the male students in this study expressed that they have experienced discrimination in both the educational institution and in practice, in their work environment (Aydin et al. 2016, 225; Kahraman, Ozonsoy Tuncdemir, and Ozcan 2015, 110). According to a qualitative study, it has been found that male students are influenced by a sexist approach of the society with regard to males in the nursing profession, and that they generally choose the nursing profession because it is easy to find a job or because their families want them to (Akman Dombekci, Erisen, and Yesildal 2019, 6715; Demiray, Bayraktar, and Khorshid 2013, 1442). The nursing profession is perceived as a profession more suited to women and this forms the basis

of male nursing students' professional problems (Akman Dombekci et al. 2019, 6716). Male students, who share this view, are more inclined to maintain a low profile when they pursue a nursing profession and they generally want to work as managers in nursing (Akman Dombekci et al. 2019, 6717).

The fourth-year students obtained a higher mean score on the "school climate" sub-dimension than did the second- and third-year students ($p<0.01$). The mean score that the students obtained on the "school climate" sub-dimension was at a moderate level (45.30±10.62). The "school climate" sub-dimension examines whether there is cooperation between the teachers and the students, what the learning environment in the classroom is like, what the attitudes and behaviours displayed by teachers are like, what the school's architectural characteristics are like, what activities are performed to develop the nursing profession at school, and whether teachers instil a love for the profession in students and feelings of solidarity among the students at the school. Studies have shown that students' levels of familiarity with (or knowledge of) an educational institution and the culture of the institution increase as students' maturity increases (Akbulut and Aslan 2016, 172; Ercan et al. 2009, 83). It is thought that the perception of the school climate becomes increasingly positive as students become more familiar with the institution and the culture of the institution.

The students who had poor academic achievements, obtained lower mean scores on the "professional attainment" sub-dimension, than did the students who had moderate or good academic achievements ($p<0.05$). The hidden curriculum is a phenomenon which is not academic, but which is thought to have a significant effect on the academic achievement of schools and it is reflected in the integration of values, attitudes, beliefs and ways of communication; it is the living culture of a school (Allan et al. 2011, 851; Sari and Doganay 2009, 926). As stated by Stojanoska, Andonovska-Trajkovska, and Zhoglev (2016), the hidden curriculum has an indirect place in the academic achievement of students. Rules, values and exemplary forms of behaviours, which are required for students to be successful, are transferred to students through the hidden curriculum (Stojanoska et al. 2016, 1611). In the literature, it is stated that situations such as moving away from the school environment and pessimism can create a negative response to the hidden curriculum (Shanthi and Angeline 2015, 76). It is thought that students with low academic achievement have problems in achieving professional attainments and moving away from the school climate. In addition, McFarland (2001, 615) argues that, in situations where teachers and the school management do not pay attention to the hidden curriculum, a large number of students will oppose school authority, in various ways, and that may lead to passive, unsuccessful students who cheat or who will act rebelliously or will not care about anything at all.

The students who chose the profession willingly, obtained higher mean scores on all the sub-dimensions of the HCASNE, than did the students who chose the profession for different reasons ($p<0.05$). While individuals who choose a profession that is in line with their talents, interests and wishes become successful, productive and happy, those

who have not chosen the profession of their own free will become unsuccessful, unproductive and unhappy (Kizgut and Ergol 2011, 4).

It is very important that individuals who choose the nursing profession, which plays a pivotal role in the protection, improvement and development of human health, should make their choices consciously and willingly (Kardas Ozdemir and Akgun Sahin 2016, 29). In our study, only 38.3% of the participating nurses chose the nursing profession willingly. Studies have reported that negative attitudes towards school and the profession influence students' perceptions about the school (Thornberg and Oguz 2013, 51; Shanthi and Angeline 2015, 76). In this context, it is thought that those who chose their profession willingly, also love the educational institution and the education environment where they learn the profession. Thus, it is expected that a student who has a positive attitude towards his or her profession, will also have positive perceptions about his or her educational institution (Orgun, Ozkutuk, and Akcakoca 2019, 1339).

Of the students in our study, those who evaluated their school's education as "very sufficient" obtained higher mean scores on the sub-dimensions, than did the students who evaluated the professional education of their school as "sufficient," "moderate" or "poor" ($p<0.05$). The hidden curriculum expresses the meanings, beliefs and rights students learn and internalise within their daily and educational routines (Yuksel 2002, 33). It is emphasised in the literature that the hidden curriculum, which is evaluated as implicit messages sent by an institutional learning environment to students through the environment and values, has a potential effect on learning and behaviours (Hafler et al. 2011, 442; Ozolins et al. 2008, 609). Thus, it is thought that students who consider the professional education of their school as sufficient, are more inclined to learn and internalise the values, attitudes, beliefs and communication elements of the institution.

The mean scores obtained on the sub-dimensions by the students who were unhappy with the school they were studying at, were lower than those of the students who were happy with the school ($p<0.001$). Of the students in our study, 81.3% stated that they were not happy with the school at which they were studying. In another study, it was found that 30.3% of the students were not happy with their school (Ozdelikara and Babur 2016, 4). The number of students who were unhappy with their school in the present study, is much higher than were the numbers in other studies. The school environment is an important factor in ensuring student satisfaction and happiness. The school environment, including the school management and teachers, contributes to student satisfaction and experience (Thornberg and Oguz 2013, 52). In the literature, students expressing negative attitudes, such as being unhappy with the school and hating some courses, generally attributed this to the education system (Ozdelikara and Babur 2016, 4; Yuksel 2002, 32). However, educators who have examined these problems, think that these problems occur largely due to the conditions regarding the education and within the school (Yuksel 2002, 32). Considering that students spend a great deal of time during their nursing education at school, immersed in an intensive curriculum, the facilities of the school are very important. In this study, the reasons for the students

being unhappy in the school, were probably due to the fact that this school has inadequate physical facilities, that the number of activities which appeal to students in the school is limited, and that the school is very far from the campus. Therefore, it is an expected result that students are unhappy with the school they are studying in, and that this situation negatively affects their perceptions about the hidden curriculum.

## Conclusion

The results of the study, which was conducted to evaluate the hidden curriculum in a nursing education institution, revealed that the students had a moderate level of perceptions about the hidden curriculum of the institution they were studying at, and of their career choice. In addition, the sufficiency of the professional education of the school and their level of happiness with the school, affected their hidden curriculum perceptions. Therefore, in order to increase the quality of their graduates, higher education institutions that provide nursing education should aim to create, develop and incorporate the hidden curriculum of the institution. Thus, the informal hidden curriculum, together with students' needs and other creative aspects, can be recognised and integrated into the formal curriculum. In addition, it is proposed that interviews be conducted with students to identify the reasons for their unhappiness and to examine these in detail, to make positive changes to the institutional climate. As a result, it is thought that this study will contribute to the preparation of the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum in parallel with each other and will give guidance to the elimination of deficiencies in this regard. This study also aspires to inform the academics, who teach at this institution, about the hidden curriculum. It is recommended that the number of studies on this subject should be increased and that these studies should be carried out with a larger group of students, through a multi-centred and experimental approach.

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