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## **STIGMA TENDENCY OF THE 1. AND 4. CLASS NURSING STUDENTS**

### **Abstract:**

**Aim:** This study was conducted to determine first and fourth- year nursing students' tendency to social stigmatization. It is thought that if health care professionals have positive and similar attitudes towards the societies they live in, they can positively change the public's attitudes towards the individuals or groups in that society. Of the health care professionals, nurses play an important role in changing the attitudes of the society. They are responsible for protecting and developing the mental health of society, within the psychiatry team. Therefore, it is important to identify future nurses' stigmatization tendency and evaluate the effect of undergraduate education on this tendency.

**Methods:** This descriptive study was conducted with the participation of the first-year (n=157) and fourth-year (n=121) nursing who studied in the department of nursing in a faculty of health sciences at a university during the 2015-2016 academic year and agreed to participate in the study. The data were collected using an information form developed by the researcher and the Stigmatization Scale. The data were evaluated using numbers and percentages, the independent samples were statistically analyzed using the t-test, and all findings were taken as significant at " $p<0.05$ ".

**Results:** The mean age of the first-year students was  $18.28\pm0.65$ , and the mean age of the fourth-year students was  $21.58\pm1.05$ . In both groups, the mean score of students' tendency to stigmatize was found to be over a medium level (critical score was 55 or higher) or at a similar level. Their mean score on the labeling, psychological health and prejudice sub-scales was also higher and at a similar level. Although the mean score on the exclusion sub-scale was lower in both groups, the fourth-year students' mean score was higher.

**Conclusion:** Although the mean score of students' tendency to stigmatize was over a medium level in both groups, it is remarkable that the mean score of the fourth-year students was higher than that of the first-year students. This study revealed the need to evaluate the undergraduate education which was given to raise public awareness of and provide information on social stigmatization considering the fact that both groups had similar sociodemographic characteristics. To reduce social stigmatization and raise public awareness, theoretical and practical consideration should be given to this issue in nursing education, and similar education should also be provided after the undergraduate education.

### **Keywords:**

Nursing student, stigma, tendency

**JEL Classification:** Z00, Z00, Z00