Original Article

Examination of Professional Commitment and Stress Management among Nurses from Different Generations

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Abstract

Objective: This study was conducted in order to examine professional commitment and stress management situations of nurses from different generations.

Methodology: This descriptive study was conducted with 175 nurses who accepted to participate in this study in a state hospital between April and July 2016. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with the scale of professional commitment in nursing and the scale of ways to cope with stress. In the analysis of the data, correlation, chi-square and student t-test were used.

Results: No statistically significant difference was found among the nurses in group X and group Y included in the research in terms of sex, position, cadre status and whether the profession was selected voluntarily (p>0.05) while there were statistically significant differences among the nurses in group X and group Y in terms of marital status, educational status and length of service (p<0.05). When total scores and sub dimension score averages of the nurses in group X and group Y in the professional commitment scale were compared, a statistically significant difference was found between two groups only in the sub dimension of maintaining professional membership (p<0.05). When sub dimension score averages of the nurses in group X and group Y in the scale of ways to cope with stress were compared, statistically significant differences were found between two groups in terms of self-confident approach and seeking social support (p<0.05).

Conclusions: The present study reveals that nurses of Y generation are more willing to maintain professional membership while nurses of X generation are more self-confident and seek social support more as a method of coping with stress when compared to the other generation. It is recommended that characteristics of generations are considered in determining the strategies that will help nurses remain in profession and cope with stress.

Key words: Coping with stress, generations, nursing, professional commitment

Introduction

In modern world, technological developments and scientific advances affect lifestyles, cultures, social circles and communications of human beings. Periods of time emerging with the influence of these developments and changes are called as generation. The concept of generation is used in order to identify human communities that are born in the same period of time and go through similar experiences. Each generation has its specific characteristics and thus, is different from other generations. One of the fields where intergenerational differences can be clearly observed is business world (Kose et al 2014). Each generation has different opportunities depending on the conditions of the period, and this causes the individuals to grow in totally different ways. As a natural consequence of all of these situations, differences are observed among generations in such aspects as perceptions, opinions, values, attitudes, behaviors, lifestyles and communication (Tuybek 2004). In particular, with the increasing number of individuals from generation Y who actively participate in business life, conflicts between generation X and

generation Y have become one of the main problems of executives (Yuksekbilgili 2015). The efficiency of precautions taken by the individual against stressors is closely related with her/his characteristically and behavioral features (Ekinci, Altun &Can 2013).

Understanding and managing differences among generations is of great importance for the present-day employees and executives who spend most of their lives in their workplaces for the efficient and effective functioning of organizations. Understanding intergenerational differences of nurses who are important members of the professional healthcare team and determining their professional commitment levels and how they manage stress are highly important in terms of contributing to the literature and raising awareness. Nurses are among the main contributors to patient care and are in direct contact with patients. Nurses' professional commitment can affect their job satisfaction and retention in nursing and enhance patient safety and care quality. Therefore, identifying factors behind their professional commitment is crucial (Akbari, Vagharseyyedin & Farajzadeh 2015). One of the factors which may affect professional commitment is different generation. Based on this point, this descriptive study was carried out in order to determine professional commitment levels and ways to cope with stress among nurses of the generation X and generation Y.

Research questions

- What is the level of professional commitment and stress management situations of nurses from different generations?
- Is there any difference between different generations of nurses in the level of commitment to the profession?
- Is there any difference between different generations of nurses in the level of coping with stress?

Methods

The cross-sectional and descriptive design was used. This study was conducted in state hospital in Burdur, Turkey. Convenience sampling methods were used. Twenty five nurses refused to participate (12.5%). The study sample consisted of 175 nurses. The sample included those who volunteered to participate in the study. The inclusion criteria for nurses were a person who voluntarily accepted participation in the research, was literate in Turkish, and was 18

years and older. The data was acquired by the researcher between April and July 2016 in a face-to-face interview method, explaining the aim of the research to the nurses who were part of the research sampling in the clinics where the research was carried out.

Instruments

Demographic characteristics

This form is comprised of eight questions regarding nurses' sociodemographic characteristics: Age, sex, marital status, educational status, employment status, working ward, choosing the profession voluntarily, and working period.

Professional commitment scale

The Professional Commitment Scale was developed and revised by the authors (Lu, Chiou & Chang 2000; 2002; 2007). This scale is composed of 26 items in total. It has three sub-scales including willingness to make effort (13 items); maintaining as a membership (8 items) and belief in goals and values (5 items). Item responses were rated on a four point scale (1 _ strongly certain, 4 _ strongly uncertain). Higher scores represent higher levels of commitment to the profession. Score of total scale is standardized between 26 and 104. In the scale nine items are reversed (14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,25). Internal consistency using Cronbach's was .94. The adaptation, reliability and validity studies of the scale in Turkey were already available (Cetinkaya, Ozmen & Temel 2015). Internal consistency using Cronbach's was .90. In this study, the reliability coefficient of the scale was determined as 0.89.

Coping strategies inventory

The Coping Strategies Inventory (CSI) is 30 item self-report questionnaire designed to assess coping thought and behaviors in response to a specific stressor. The format of the CSI is adapted from Lazarus "Ways of Coping' questionnaire (Folkman & Lazarus 1980; Folkman & Lazarus 1985; Folkman & Lazarus 1988). The Coping Strategies Inventory is adapted from Sahin & Durak (1995) for the Turkish society. It has five sub-scales including self-confidence approach (7 items), optimistic approach (5 items), helpless approach (8 items), submissive approach (6 items) and social support approach (4 items). Using a three-point likert

scale format. In the scale two items are reversed (1. and 9.). Total scores for all components range from 0 to 3. Total scores for each component were computed by adding the items values in each component and then dividing them by the number of items in that component. The internal consistency reliability analysis revealed reliability between alpha = 0.47-0.80 for all of the scales for Turkish society by Sahin & Durak (1995). In this study, the internal consistency reliability analysis revealed reliability between alpha = 0.42-0.76 for all of the scales.

Ethical considerations

Written permission from Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Ethical Committee (GO 2016/8) and the Burdur State Hospital (49810142/806.02.02) was also obtained. The objective of the research was explained to the participants and written permission was received from those agreeing to participate in the research.

Data analysis

Analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics tests using the Statistical Package for the Social Services SPSS 17.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL). A test of hypothesis with p value of <0.05 was considered significant.

Results

Nurses were mostly (62.9%) from generation X (1966-1979) while 37.1 % of them were from generation Y (1980-1995), were mostly (92%) female, married (77.7%), 41.7 % of them had bachelor's degree, 92.6 % of them were working as ward nurse, 97.1 % of them were working as permanent staff, 73.7 % of them chose the profession of nursing voluntarily and average working period was 16.46 ± 9.27 (Table 1).

No statistically significant difference was found among nurses in the group X and group Y in terms of sex, position, cadre status and whether the profession was selected voluntarily (p<0.05). However, a statistically significant difference was detected among nurses in group X and group Y in terms of marital status, educational status and length of service (p<0.05) (Table 2). Differences were found among nurses from different generations only in terms of marital status, educational status and length of service. Difference was found between two groups since 94.5 % of nurses of generation X were married while 49.2 % of nurses of generation Y were married. Also, difference was found between two

groups since average length of service among nurses of generation X was 22.15±5.57 while average length of service among nurses of generation Y was 6.84±5.58. (Table 2).

No statistically significant difference was found among the nurses in the group X and group Y included in the research in terms of sex, position, cadre status and whether the profession was selected voluntarily (p>0.05) while statistically significant differences were found among the nurses in the group X and group Y in terms of marital status, educational status and length of service (p<0.05) (Table 2).

When total scores and sub dimension score averages of nurses in the group X and group Y in the professional commitment scale were compared, a statistically significant difference was found between two groups only in terms of maintaining professional membership (p<0.05) (Table 3). When sub dimension score averages of nurses in the group X and group Y in the scale of ways to cope with stress were compared, a statistically significant difference was found between two groups in terms of self-confident approach and seeking social support (p<0.05) (Table 3).

Discussion

Considering the birth date interval of generation X, it is an expected result that the length of service is longer and married ones are more common. Low number of individuals with bachelor's degree in the generation Y which includes newly graduated nurses made a difference. This result may be attributed to the fact that the number of nurses from generation Y is lower than that of nurses from generation X in the sample.

When total scores and sub dimension score averages of nurses in group X and Y in professional commitment scale were compared, statistically significant difference was found between two groups only in terms of maintaining professional membership (p<0.05) (Table 3). According to this result, sub dimension of maintaining professional membership which is one of the sub dimensions of professional commitment is better in generation Y. When professional commitment situations of nurses from generation X and generation Y were compared, it was determined that there were no differences between two groups in terms of willingness to make efforts and belief in targets-

values but nurses from generation Y were more determined to maintain their profession since they received higher scores in the sub dimension of maintaining the profession. This result may be attributed to the fact that nurses from generation X suffer from professional deformation since they have been working as nurse for long years. However, since nurses of generation Y are beginning nurses, they might be more idealistic.

Table 1. **Demographic Characteristics of the Nurses (n=175).**

Demographic characteristics	n	%
Generation		
X Generation (1966-1979)	110	62.9
Y Generation (1980-1995)	65	37.1
Gender		
Female	161	92.0
Male	14	8.0
Marital status		
Married	136	77.7
Single	39	22.3
Educational level		
High school	33	18.9
Pre- Bachelor's	65	37.1
Bachelor	73	41.7
Master	4	2.3
Duty		
Clinical nurse	162	92.6
Specialist nurse	13	7.4
Employment status		
Permanent	170	97.1
Conditional	5	2.9
Selecting willingly Profession		
Yes	129	73.7
No	46	26.3
Total	**175**	**100.0**
Years of service (years)	**M** ±	**SD**
	16.46 ±	9.27

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Different Generations Nurses

Demographic characteristics	X Generation (1966-1979) (n=110)	Y Generation (1980-1995) (n=65)	Statistical Analysis
	n %	n %	
Gender			
Female	104(%94.5)	57(%87.7)	χ^2=1.759*
Male	6(%5.5)	8(%12.3)	p=.185
Marital status			
Married	104(%94.5)	32(%49.2)	χ^2=45.86*
Single	6(%5.5)	33(%50.8)	p=.000
Educational level			
High school	5(%4.5)	28(43.1)	
Pre- Bachelor's	58(52.7)	7(10.8)	χ^2=51.86
Bachelor	45(40.9)	28(43.1)	p=.000
Master	2(1.8)	2(3.1)	
Duty			
Clinical nurse	100(%90.9)	62(%95.4)	p=.376**
Specialist nurse	10(%9.1)	3(%4.6)	
Employment status			
Permanent	109(%99.1)	61(%93.8)	p=.064**
Conditional	1(%.9)	4(%6.2)	
Selecting willingly Profession			
Yes	77(%70)	52(%80.0)	χ^2=1.62
No	33(%30)	13(%20.0)	p=.203*
	M ± SD	**M ± SD**	
Years of service (years)			t=17.54
	22.15±5.57	6.84±5.58	p=.000

* Yates correction was made because the number is under 25. ** Corrected Fisher χ2 was used for that number expected under 5.

Table 3. Comparing Nurses' Professional Commitment Scale and Coping Strategies Inventory Mean Score Based on Their Generations

		X Generation (1966-1979) (n=110) M ± SD	Y Generation (1980-1995) (n=65) M ± SD	Statistical Analysis
Professional Commitment Scale and Sub Scales	Willingness to make effort (13 items)	30.08±5.59	30.50±6.87	t= -.446 p=.656
	Maintaining as a membership (8 items)	17.42±4.08	18.92±4.44	t= -2.263 p=.025*
	Belief in goals and values (5 items)	10.40±1.87	10.23±2.47	t=.476 p=.635
	Total Scale	57.90±9.76	59.66±12.18	t= -1.045 p=.298
Coping Strategies Inventory Sub Scales	Self confidence approach (7 items)	.93±.45	.78±.40	t=2.229 p=.027*
	Optimistic approach (5 items)	.99±.37	1.04±.41	t= -.741 p=.460
	Helpless approach (8 items)	1.81±.50	1.85±.44	t= -.525 p=.600
	Submissive approach (6 items)	1.84±.46	1.93±.36	t= -1.352 p=.178
	Social support approach (4 items)	1.13±.43	.92±.44	t=3.029 p=.003*

*p<0.05

When sub dimension score averages of nurses in the group X and group Y in the scale of ways to cope with stress were compared, statistically significant differences were found between two groups in terms of self-confident approach and seeking social support. (Table 3). Besides, it was reported that, from among the ways of nurses from different generations to cope with stress, self-confident approach and act of seeking social support were more common in the generation X. This finding is important as it reflects the proper characteristics of generations. When ways of nurses from generation X and generation Y to cope with stress were examined, there were no significant differences between two groups in the sub dimensions of optimistic approach, desperate approach and submissive approach while self-confident approach and act of seeking social support were more common in the generation X (Mucevher 2015). This result may be attributed to the fact that the number of nurses from generation X is higher in the sample, and they can be more self-confident thanks to the life experience gained in years. Also, the fact that the generation X seeks social support more than the generation Y complies with the characteristics of the generation X. Considering that the generation Y is more individualistic, this is an expected result. There was a significant and negative correlation between self-confidence approach and optimistic approach and a significant and positive correlation between self-confidence approach and submissive approach. As the Y generation of nurses' work-related tension increased, self-confidence approach and optimistic approach decreased whereas submissive approach increased. There was a significant and negative correlation between the age of the beginning of working and seeking social support approach and as the age of the beginning of working increased

seeking social support decreased. It was explored that nurses who were female and responsible for the services used self-confidence approach and seeking social support approach more (Tel et al. 2012). When the generation X is examined in terms of business life, common features of this generation include loyalty to workplace, high admissibility and persistence in one job. Generation X is sensitive to social problems, has high work motivation and is respectful to authority (Mengi 2009). In addition to having tendency to take more risks and to question the existing traditions when compared to previous generations, they are more family-oriented, more self-confident, more open-minded and fond of entertainment (Etlican 2015). In accordance with the characteristics of this generation, families are interconnected and away from individualism. Most of them currently work as executives and manage the generation Y (Keles 2011). As for the generation Y, it consists of young individuals in the business life. This generation which is fond of its independence and grew in an environment shaped by internet is the latest generation in the business life (Aydemir and Dinc 2015). The rate of the participants from generation Y was found to be 37.1 % in our study. Thus, the present study mainly focused on the generation X.

Conclusion

Awareness about the characteristics of generations which emerge with the influence of scientific and technological developments is of great importance in order to understand the generations. Understanding intergenerational differences among nurses who are important members of the professional healthcare team is highly important to determine their professional commitment levels and stress management ways and to raise awareness. According to the results of the study, there are no statistically significant differences among nurses in the group X and group Y in terms of sex, position, cadre status and whether the profession is selected voluntarily while there are significant differences among those nurses in terms of marital status, educational status and length of service.

Also, the present study reports that nurses of generation Y are more willing to maintain the profession while nurses from generation X are more self-confident and seek social support more as ways of coping with stress. It is recommended that characteristics of generations should be taken into consideration while strategies that will help

nurses remain in the profession and cope with stress are being determined.

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