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The Impact of the Pandemic on Postgraduate Nursing Students: Comparison of Master's and Doctorate Studies

Pandeminin Lisansüstü Hemşirelik Öğrencileri Üzerindeki Etkisi: Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Çalışmalarının Karşılaştırılması

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Abstract: This study was conducted to determine the effect of the pandemic on the education and scientific research activities of nursing graduate students. The descriptive and cross-sectional research was carried out in Türkiye between February and March 2021 with 383 postgraduate students, 218 of whom are master's and 165 are doctoral students. The data were collected using an online questionnaire. Descriptive statistical methods, independent groups t-test and chi-square test were used to evaluate the data. The majority of the master's students were nurses (83.5%), and the majority of doctorate students were academicians (79.4%). During the pandemic, 75.7% of master's students and 80.6% of doctorate students completed their education online. While 50.3% of doctoral students made scientific publications and 44.8% participated in scientific events, only 18.8% of master's students had publications and 21.6% participated in congresses and symposiums. Master's students had more difficulties in communicating with the instructors, maintaining course attendance, and focusing on educational activities compared to doctorate students. Similarly, master's students had lower satisfaction with the efficiency of the courses, achievement of learning objectives, course achievements, scientific meetings, scientific publications, and academic consulting activities. The lowest satisfaction in both groups was academic consulting and advisory processes (Master's: 8.7%, Doctorate: 9.1%). The pandemic has affected master's and doctorate students' training and research activities. During the pandemic, nursing students enrolled in the master's program experienced more difficulties and were less satisfied with educational activities than doctoral students.

Keywords: Pandemics, Distance education, Postgraduate nursing education, Master's, Doctorate.

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Öz: Bu çalışma pandeminin hemşirelik lisansüstü öğrencilerinin eğitim ve bilimsel araştırma faaliyetlerine etkisini belirlemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Araştırma tanımlayıcı ve kesitsel olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma Türkiye'de Şubat-Mart 2021 tarihleri arasında 218 yüksek lisans ve 165 doktora olmak üzere 383 lisansüstü öğrenci ile yürütülmüştür. Veriler internet ortamında uygulanan anket formu ile toplanmıştır. Verilerin değerlendirilmesinde tanımlayıcı istatistiksel metodlar, bağımsız gruplarda t testi ve ki kare testi kullanılmıştır. Yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin %83,5'i hemşire, doktora öğrencilerinin %79,4'ü akademisyendir. Pandemi döneminde yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin %75,7'si, doktora öğrencilerinin %80,6'sı eğitimlerini online olarak gerçekleştirmiştir. Bu dönemde doktora öğrencilerinin %50,3'ü bilimsel yayın yapıp %44,8'i bilimsel etkinliğe katılırken, yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin %18,8'i yayın yapmış ve %21,6'sı kongre ve sempozyuma katılmıştır. Yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin öğretim elemanları ile iletişim kurma, derse devam sağlama ve eğitim faaliyetlerine odaklanma konularında doktora öğrencilerine göre daha fazla zorluk yaşadıkları görülmüştür. Benzer şekilde yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin derslerin verimliliği, öğrenme hedeflerine ulaşılması, ders başarıları, bilimsel toplantılar, bilimsel yayınlar ve danışmanlık faaliyetlerinden daha düşük memnuniyet duydukları görülmüştür. Her iki grupta memnuniyetin en düşük olduğu alanın danışmanlık süreçleri (yüksek lisans: %8,7, doktora: %9,1) ile ilgili olduğu saptanmıştır. Pandemi yüksek lisans ve doktora öğrencilerinin eğitim ve araştırma faaliyetlerini etkilemiştir. Pandemi döneminde yüksek lisans öğrencileri doktora öğrencilerine göre eğitim faaliyetlerinde daha fazla güçlük yaşamış ve eğitim faaliyetlerinden daha düşük memnuniyet bildirmişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pandemi, Uzaktan eğitim, Lisansüstü hemşirelik eğitimi, Yüksek lisans, Doktora.

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1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 emerged as a global pandemic in 2020 and has significantly affected educational activities worldwide. During the first year of the pandemic, when protection via vaccines was unavailable, universities switched to distance education, and master's and doctorate programs in graduate education were carried out with distance education as well (Yamamoto & Altun, 2013).

The initial postgraduate education programs in nursing date back to 50 years ago in Türkiye. Students were first admitted to the master's program in nursing in 1968 and to the doctorate program in 1972 (Kapucu & Bulut, 2019). Today, the number of master's and doctorate programs in universities has reached 69 and 35, respectively (Özkütük, 2018). The number of nursing students studying in postgraduate programs increased 5.3 times after the 2000s (Council of Higher Education [CHE], 2017). Between 2000 and 2015, 3.450 nurses graduated from these programs (Kocaman & Arslan Yürümezoğlu, 2015). The extensive demand for graduate programs in nursing is considered as an indicator of nurses' motivation for self-improvement, and such a demand requires the development of appropriate educational settings (Adam et al, 2019; Kocaman & Arslan Yürümezoğlu, 2015; Persky et al., 2020). Postgraduate programs consist of two stages (course and thesis). The core components of these programs are research, teaching, clinical practice, and mentoring (Persky et al., 2020). The main purpose of these programs is to train qualified manpower that can produce and use knowledge and solve problems with critical thinking (Karaman & Bakırcı, 2010). Postgraduate nursing students are expected to learn in-depth information in their chosen field, to conduct research on nursing practices using analytical thinking, and to use evidence-based data in these studies (Bahçecik & Alpar, 2009).

The studies showed that while distance education had advantages, such as providing a flexible learning environment, being accessible and economical (Clark, 2020; Genç & Gümrükçüoğlu, 2021) but distraction, lack of motivation, communication problems, insufficient infrastructure concerning internet access, and difficulties in comprehending applied courses were reported as disadvantages (Dhawan, 2020).

The effect of distance education on educational activities may differ according to the program in which students are enrolled in (Genç & Gümrükçüoğlu, 2021; Nsengimana et al., 2021; Watson et al., 2020). It was reported that distance education in applied disciplines such as nursing had significant disadvantages for postgraduate students in achieving the program objectives, such as analytical thinking, evidence-based research, and field-specific skills (Ergin & Şahan, 2021; Watson et al., 2020). Skills acquisition concerning interactive communication with patients was largely interrupted by the postponement of clinical practices in nursing education during the pandemic (Dewart et al., 2020). During this period, students mostly experienced higher anxiety about being unable to complete their education due to time pressures; therefore, their motivation decreased (Persky et al., 2020; Watson et al., 2020). In addition, postgraduate students in particular had to suspend their registration, lose semesters, or delay their graduation because they were unable to collect data or obtain institutional/ethical permission for their work/studies required by their programs (Ergin & Şahan, 2021).

Training researchers in the field of nursing, developing knowledge in the field of nursing, and basing nursing practices on a scientific basis are closely related to the quality of graduate education programs (Bahçecik & Alpar, 2009). Scientific competence in graduate education affects the quality of the university in particular and society in general (Karaman & Bakırcı, 2010). Scientific competence in postgraduate education requires carrying out scientific research activities after a prespecified training period.

1.1. Aim of the study

This study aimed to determine the educational and scientific research activities of the students enrolled in the master's and doctorate programs in nursing during the pandemic and to determine difficulties and satisfaction during this period.

1.2. The importance of the study

The pandemic process has made distance education compulsory so that education is not interrupted. In this process, graduate education programs in nursing were also carried out with distance education activities. The findings of this study will contribute to improving the quality of distance education by revealing the possible problems encountered by nursing students registered in master's and doctoral programs in distance education programs during the pandemic period and by creating solutions for the future.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research design

The research was descriptive and cross-sectional.

2.2. The universe and sample of the research/participants

The most recent data on the number of students attending graduate programs in nursing departments indicate a total of 7,516 students, including 6,157 graduate and 1,359 doctorate students, either starting or continuing these programs (CHE, 2017). As reported in the literature, Krejcie and Morgan calculated the number of the sample according to the size of the university based on the following formula: $s = \frac{X^2NP}{d^2(N-1)+X^2P}$ (1-P) (Ural & Kılıç, p. 47). Based on this calculation, the sample size to represent the universe was determined to be 367 students. The research was completed with 383 students who agreed to participate in the study, had access to the submitted questionnaire, and filled out the questionnaire completely.

2.3. Data collection tools and process

Research data were collected using the convenience sampling method via social media between February and March 2021 using Google Forms. The questionnaire was sent to the students enrolled in graduate nursing programs via social media platforms (WhatsApp groups and e-mail), and the data were collected online.

2.3.1. Questionnaire form

Research data was collected with a 29-item questionnaire consisting of questions and statements about information on participants' sociodemographic characteristics (i.e., age, gender, marital status, stage of the postgraduate program, employment status, etc.), their scientific research activities (i.e., scientific publication and scientific congress/symposium) during the pandemic, their satisfaction with the educational activities during the pandemic, and the difficulties they experienced in educational activities during the pandemic.

2.4. Data analysis

The data were evaluated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22.0. Descriptive statistical methods, independent group t-test, and chi-square test were used in the evaluation of the data. Statistical significance was taken as $p < 0,05$.

2.5. Ethical approval

In this study, all rules stated to be followed within the scope of the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed. None of the actions specified under the title of

“Actions Violating Scientific Research and Publication Ethics,” which is the second part of the directive, have not been carried out

Ethics committee permission information

Ethical committee: Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University Social Sciences Ethics Committee for Human Research

Data of ethical approval: 01.02.2021

The number of ethical approvals: 2021/38

The study was approved also by the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Health, COVID-19 Scientific Research Platform (date: January 20, 2021). Informed consent was presented to the students on the initial page of the questionnaire, and only the students who agreed to participate in the research were able to continue the survey.

3. FINDINGS

Descriptive characteristics of Master's and Doctorate students are shown in Table 1. The majority of the students were female in both groups, the number of married people was higher in the doctorate group, and the mean age for the master's students was 26.56 ± 3.55 years, while it was 31.24 ± 4.34 years for the doctorate students. It was observed that half of the students in both groups were taking courses, and the other half were in the thesis stage. While 83.5% of the master's students worked as nurses, 79.4% of the doctorate students were academicians. Results revealed that the majority of the students in both groups continued their education in a state university and continued their studies in a metropolitan city. During the pandemic, 21.1% of master's students and 13.3% of doctorate students suspended their enrollments, and 1/5 of the master's students (18.8%) and approximately 1/6 of the doctorate students (15.2%) asked for and received additional time.

It was observed that the courses were mostly conducted online (Master's: 75.7%; Doctorate: 80.6%) in both groups during the pandemic, in which half of the master's students (52.3%) and approximately 2/3 of the doctorate students (71.5%) did not have clinical practice. After the pandemic, 31.2% of the master's students and 40.0% of the doctorate students demanded the continuation of online postgraduate education in nursing.

Table 1.

Descriptive Characteristics of Master's and Doctorate Students (n=383)

Characteristics	Master (n=218)		Doctorate (n=165)		Total (n=383)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender						
Female	192	88,1	154	93,3	346	90,4
Male	26	11,9	11	6,7	37	9,6
Marital status						
Single	166	76,1	82	49,7	248	64,7
Married	52	23,9	83	50,3	135	3,3
Mean age (Mean±Sd)	26,6 ±3,55		31,24±4,34		28,57 ±4,54	
Graduate program						
Nursing fundamental	11	5,1	23	14,0	34	8,9
Medical nursing	34	15,6	11	6,7	45	11,8
Surgical nursing	10	4,5	17	10,4	27	7,0
Pediatric nursing	26	12,0	33	20,0	59	15,4
Obstetrics and gynaecology nursing	55	25,3	26	15,6	81	21,1
Public health nursing	42	19,2	27	16,3	69	18,1
Psychiatric nursing	25	11,5	20	12,1	45	11,7
Management in nursing	7	3,2	5	3,0	12	3,1
Education in nursing	8	3,6	3	1,9	11	2,9
Graduate program phase						
Lesson	105	48,2	81	49,1	186	48,5
Thesis	113	51,8	84	50,9	197	51,5
Working status						
Unemployed	24	11,0	3	1,8	27	7,1
Academician	36	16,5	131	79,4	167	43,6
Health Worker (public/private)	158	83,5	31	18,8	189	49,3
University feature						
State	196	89,9	155	93,9	351	91,7
Foundation	22	10,1	10	6,1	32	8,3
Postgraduate education residential area						
Metropolis	139	63,8	132	80,0	271	70,8
City	74	33,9	27	16,4	101	26,3
District	5	2,3	6	3,6	11	2,9
Academic title of advisor						
Assistant professor	107	49,1	42	25,5	149	3,0
Associate professor	70	32,1	49	29,7	119	31,0
Professor	41	18,8	74	44,8	115	30,0
Impact on the continuation of postgraduate education						
Educational process unaffected	127	58,3	116	70,3	243	63,5
Registration freeze	46	21,1	22	13,3	68	17,8
Get additional time	41	18,8	25	15,2	66	17,2
Drop out of education	4	1,8	2	1,2	6	1,5
Type of the education						
Online	165	75,7	133	80,6	298	77,9
Face to face	22	10,1	19	11,5	41	10,7
Hybrid (online+face to face)	31	14,2	13	7,9	44	11,4
Clinical practices						

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(Pandeminin Lisansüstü Hemşirelik Öğrencileri Üzerindeki Etkisi: Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Çalışmalarının

Karşılaştırılması)

No clinical application	114	52,3	118	71,5	232	60,6
In clinic	39	17,9	9	5,5	48	12,6
Online case discussion	59	27,1	30	18,2	89	23,2
Discussion of clinical videos	6	2,7	8	4,8	14	3,6
Demand for online graduate education in post-pandemic nursing						
Yes	68	31,2	66	40,0	134	35,0
No	91	41,7	66	40,0	157	41,0
Indecisive	59	27,1	33	20,0	92	24,0
Total	218	100,0	165	100,0	383	100,0

Figure 1 presents the involvement of graduate students in scientific research based on their programs. The rates of scientific publication, participation in congresses-symposiums, and involvements in projects were higher among the doctorate students compared to master's students, respectively (Master's 18.8%, 21.6%, 3.7%; Doctorate: 50.3%, 44.8%, 9.7%). Regarding organization of symposiums/congresses (Master's: 4.1%; Doctorate: 5.5%) and participation in courses and seminars (Master's: 14.7%; Doctorate: 18.2%), both groups were found to be similar with low rates.

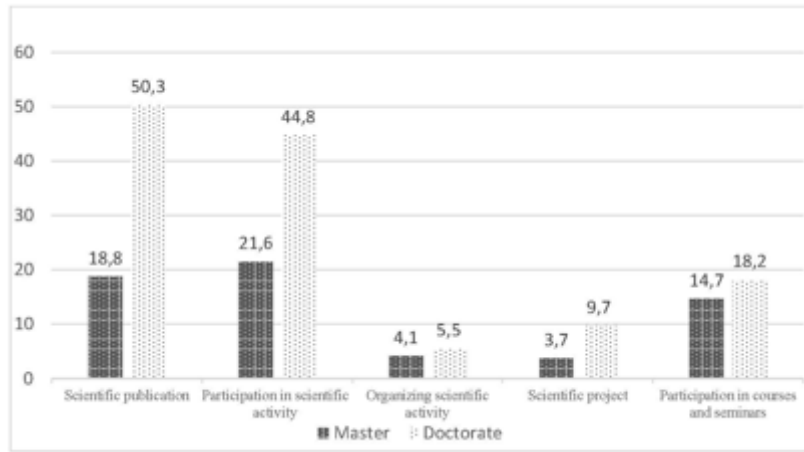


Figure 1. Involvement of Master's and Doctorate students in scientific research

Comparison of Master's and Doctorate students' views on the difficulties of educational activities during the pandemic is presented in Table 2. Comparison of the difficulties experienced by postgraduate nursing students in education based on their programs during the pandemic showed that master's students had more problems in maintaining course attendance and communicating with instructors compared to doctorate students and could not focus on educational activities due to fatigue/burnout ($p < .01$). There was no difference between the groups in terms of technical infrastructure, motivation, research, and application activities, time management, and economic difficulties ($p > .05$).

Table 2.

Comparison of Master's and Doctorate Students' Views on The Difficulties of Educational Activities During the Pandemic (n=383)

Expressions	Master		Doctorate		Total		Statistical analysis
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Lack of technical infrastructure (system problems due to lack of computer, internet and hardware)							
Yes	96	44,0	65	39,4	161	42,0	X ² = 0.831
No	122	56,0	100	60,6	222	58,0	p= .362
Lack of motivation							
Yes	91	41,7	63	38,2	154	40,2	X ² = 0.495
No	127	58,3	102	61,8	229	59,8	p= .482
Difficulty in maintaining research and practice activities (Data collection, obtaining institutional permission)							
Yes	71	32,6	69	41,8	140	36,6	X ² = 3.464
No	147	67,4	96	58,2	243	63,4	p= .063
Difficulty in maintaining course attendance							
Yes	110	50,5	22	13,3	132	34,5	X ² = 57.310
No	108	49,5	143	86,7	251	65,5	p= .000
Difficulty concentrating on education							
Yes	96	44,0	23	13,9	119	31,1	X ² = 39.723
No	122	56,0	142	86,1	264	68,9	p= .000
Difficulty communicating with instructors							
Yes	87	39,9	31	18,8	118	30,8	X ² = 19.652
No	131	60,1	134	81,2	265	69,2	p= .000
Difficulty in time management							
Yes	142	65,1	113	68,5	255	66,4	X ² =0.473
No	76	34,9	52	31,5	125	3,4	p= .492
Economic difficulties							
Yes	115	52,8	89	53,9	204	53,3	X ² = 0.053
No	103	47,2	76	46,1	179	46,7	p= .818

Comparison of Master's and Doctorate students' satisfaction levels with educational activities during the pandemic is provided in Table 3. Doctorate students' efficiency in courses, achievement of the learning objectives in courses, academic performance, satisfaction with scientific meetings, scientific research and consulting/advisory activities were found to be higher compared to the master's students ($p < .05$). On the other hand, the master's students were more satisfied with the thesis follow-up and thesis defence processes and the expectations of their instructors about training compared to the doctorate students ($p < .05$). The groups were similar in terms of satisfaction with scientific publication activities ($p > .05$).

Table 3.

Comparison of Master's and Doctorate Students' Satisfaction Levels with Educational Activities During the Pandemic (n=383)

Expressions	Master		Doctorate		Total		Statistical analysis
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Satisfaction with course efficiency							
Yes	41	18,8	36	21,8	77	20,1	X ² = 27.964 p= .000
No	122	56,0	50	30,3	172	44,9	
Indecisive	55	25,2	79	47,9	134	35,0	
Satisfaction with the achievement of the learning objectives of the courses							
Yes	40	18,3	49	29,7	89	23,2	X ² = 8.384 p= .015
No	132	60,6	78	47,3	210	54,9	
Indecisive	46	21,1	38	23,0	84	21,9	
Satisfaction with scientific publication activities							
Yes	43	19,7	38	23,0	81	21,1	X ² = 1.023 p= .600
No	107	49,1	73	44,2	180	47,0	
Indecisive	68	31,2	54	32,8	122	31,9	
Satisfaction with assessments/lesson success							
Yes	80	36,7	49	29,7	129	33,7	X ² = 9.986 p= .007
No	94	43,1	59	35,8	153	39,9	
Indecisive	44	20,2	57	34,5	101	26,4	
Satisfaction with scientific meeting activities							
Yes	68	31,2	69	41,8	137	35,8	X ² = 8.800 p= .012
No	111	50,9	59	35,8	170	44,4	
Indecisive	39	17,9	37	22,4	76	19,8	
Satisfaction with scientific research activities							
Yes	19	8,7	26	15,8	45	11,7	X ² = 6.337 p= .041
No	132	60,6	102	61,8	234	61,1	
Indecisive	67	30,7	37	22,4	104	27,2	
Satisfaction with thesis follow-up and defense processes							
Yes	65	47,8	71	43,0	136	35,5	X ² = 7.262 p= .026
No	83	38,1	49	29,7	132	34,5	
Indecisive	70	32,1	45	27,3	115	30,0	
Satisfaction with the educational expectations of the instructors							
Yes	126	57,8	72	43,6	198	51,7	X ² = 7.596 p= .022
No	41	18,8	43	26,1	84	21,9	
Indecisive	51	23,4	50	30,3	101	26,4	
Satisfaction with supervisor processes							
Yes	19	8,7	15	9,1	34	8,9	X ² = 21.334 p= .000
No	120	55,0	53	32,1	173	45,1	
Indecisive	79	36,3	97	58,8	176	46,0	

4. DISCUSSION RESULTS and CONCLUSION

Preventing students from carrying out scientific research activities has been one of the most important effects of the pandemic on postgraduate education (Ergin & Şahan, 2021). This study determined that the rate of writing scientific articles, participating in scientific activities, and taking part in scientific projects was higher for doctorate students, and their satisfaction with these activities was higher compared to master's students. This can be explained by the fact that four-fifths of the doctorate students had already worked as academicians at the university, and they had more scientific competencies. The research finding claiming that students in nursing doctorate programs gain professionalism in planning and carrying out research during their doctorate education also supports this view. In line with the findings of the research conducted to determine nursing doctorate programs students' views on doctorate education, students reported gaining professionalism in planning and carrying out research in these programs (Kapucu & Bulut, 2019). A study conducted with postgraduate students in Iran demonstrated that students in senior classes knew more about effective factors related to research activities and displayed appropriate attitudes (Safari et al., 2015).

One of the main goals of graduate programs is to enable students to interpret events from a broad and deep perspective by conducting scientific research. Scientific research is also important in improving patient safety and care quality (Bahçecik & Alpar, 2009). The self-improvement needs of students enrolled in these programs require the development of suitable settings for graduate education. Participation in scientific activities such as congresses and symposiums, which are environments where knowledge is shared during the education process, enables students to develop and renew themselves (Karaman & Bakırcı, 2010). However, postgraduate students experience anxiety about designing studies, data collection methods, and writing and presenting articles (Ezebilo, 2012). Dubey and Ranjan (2020) reported that the decrease in the number of patients who applied to outpatient clinics in hospitals due to the pandemic prevented the continuation of postgraduate research projects. In this context, it can be argued that master's students were unable gain experience in planning and conducting scientific research activities during this period. For this reason, it seems important that advisers support students more in this context.

This study determined that master's students had more difficulty in maintaining course attendance compared to doctorate students. This is an expected result considering the fact that 83.5% of the master's students were also healthcare professionals. During the pandemic, the most extensively overworked occupational group was healthcare professionals. Similarly, a study conducted with postgraduate nursing students in Egypt determined that employed students had to attend the program for longer durations, and working days were the most challenging factor for them (Adam et al., 2019). Distance education may be preferred by postgraduate nursing students who are mostly working and have many responsibilities (Kozan et al., 2021). The research found that 31.2% of the master's students and 40.0% of the doctorate students demanded that the education continue remotely in the future as well. This result may be due to the fact that master's students had more difficulties during the distance education process, and their satisfaction was lower.

This study found that students with master's degrees had more difficulties in communicating with their instructors. In times of crisis, it is important for students to understand the changing expectations of the program, the decisions that are made, and why those decisions are made (Persky et al., 2020). Master's students may experience inadequacy in problem solving since they have more limited knowledge and experience compared to doctorate students. For this reason, advisers should establish open communication with their students and support them.

In times of crisis, such as a pandemic, programs can be reorganized to achieve the main goals of the programs, but if the mental and physical well-being of the students cannot be maintained, reaching the program goals cannot be considered a success (Persky et al., 2020). The study identified that one-third of the students reported fatigue and burnout, and it was found that the inability to focus on education due to fatigue and burnout was higher in master's students compared to doctorate students. Students working as

nurses having more difficulties in performing educational activities could be associated with the multiple roles and responsibilities they shouldered. Even if their motivation is high, the difficulties experienced by students during the education process increase due to the multiple roles and responsibilities that already exist (Adam et al., 2019). Considering that the pandemic has increased the workload and burnout of nurses as healthcare professionals (Teng et al., 2020), it seems important to provide more support to students who continue the program as healthcare professionals.

The quality of education must be maintained even during chaotic times, such as the current pandemic (Şanlı et al., 2021). This study concluded that master's students were less satisfied with the efficiency of their courses than doctorate students. Consistent with these findings, a study in which the majority of the participants were master's students determined that students' satisfaction with the efficiency of their courses was lower during the distance education process (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). A qualitative study conducted with graduate students concluded that nearly half of the students' perceptions regarding the educational activities were negative, while positive perceptions were associated with educational activities opening new horizons for students, providing the opportunity for self-development, and enriching their knowledge (Limon & Durnalı, 2018). The important factors that reduce student satisfaction with lesson efficiency were related to the problems experienced by the students in attending and following the lessons and the lack of infrastructure (Keskin & Kaya, 2020). The finding related to students' dissatisfaction with the course efficiency in this study can also be regarded as the result of the master's students' difficulties in maintaining course attendance and focusing on educational activities.

The recently acclaimed assessment and evaluation approach focuses on the process as well as the product. Course achievement includes applying and structuring knowledge and transforming this knowledge into high-level skills, rather than recalling and retaining knowledge (Özdemir et al., 2014). The present study concluded that master's students were less satisfied with their course achievement and the achievement of the learning objectives in courses compared to doctorate students. It is reported that educational institutions should be flexible by acting outside existing patterns to reach the goals of the education programs and to meet the expectations of the students regarding these programs, especially during periods when educational activities are affected, such as the pandemic (Persky et al., 2020). The weakness of the pedagogical design of the program, the inability to achieve program goals with distance education, failure to clearly specify the evaluation methods, the inability of the students to adapt to the courses, and the high course and homework load were identified as factors affecting the success of the course and the achievement of course goals (Kozan et al., 2020). The clinical applications of theoretical courses were also carried out online during the transition to distance education in the pandemic. It can be argued that this practice may have negatively affected satisfaction with educational activities since it created an obstacle to the transformation of theory into practice.

The rapid and sharp transition to distance education due to the pandemic has been challenging not only for students but also for educators (Yamamoto & Altun, 2020). The research determined that the courses could be provided face to face at a rate of only 1/10 in both groups. This rate reveals the necessity for educators to use technology effectively in education (Şanlı et al., 2021). Although it seems natural and quite normal that the students' expectations from the educators were not sufficiently met during the adaptation process to the sudden and rapidly evolving distance education programs (Nsengimana et al., 2021), it can be argued that students' very low satisfaction levels with the educational activities have made it crucial for

educators to use innovative approaches in the course, practice, scientific activities, and evaluation methods in distance education.

The academic consulting and advisory process in graduate education is closely related to success in education, as well as the increase in quality, motivation, and satisfaction with education processes (Ergin & Şahan, 2021). Some studies have shown that students do not receive enough support from advisers during the postgraduate education process (Matin & Khan, 2017), as well as studies concluding that students are satisfied with the academic consulting and advisory process (Genç & Gümrükçüoğlu, 2021). The current research determined that the satisfaction rates from the academic consulting and advisory process were low in both groups (Master's: 8.7%, Doctorate: 9.1%). While more than half of the students in the master's group (55.0%) clearly stated that they were not satisfied with the academic consulting and advisory, more than half of the doctorate students (58.8%) expressed indecision about this situation. This result may be related to the fact that the doctorate students worked in the same institution with their advisers and were aware of their heavy workloads.

A study conducted by Adam et al. (2019) with 236 nursing master's and doctorate students concluded that more than 3/4 of the students reported that academic consulting and advisory were quite challenging for them, and the most challenging factor regarding consulting was related to the fact that their advisers were busy with too many students. The increase in the number of students in graduate programs in Türkiye has led to an increase in the number of students who need a faculty member as an adviser. For this reason, the number of students per faculty member in master's and doctorate programs has increased to 14 (Council of Higher Education [CHE], 2016). In this context, the high student load of the advisers may have negatively affected the time that the adviser allocated to the students in the present study.

The study found that doctorate students' satisfaction with thesis follow-up and thesis defence processes was lower compared to the satisfaction experienced by master's students. For students who are in the thesis stage, identifying the research topic, obtaining institutional permissions, conducting the research, and defending it before the jury requires efficient time management skills (Dubey & Ranjan, 2020; Ergin & Şahan, 2021). However, the thesis follow-up exams are not routine for students in the master's program, and students take the thesis defence exam at the end of 2 years. Unlike master's students, doctorate students are required to be successful in various comprehensive exams (CHE, 2016). It can be argued that these comprehensive evaluations challenge students in doctorate programs. In addition, the supportive attitude of the instructors in the thesis follow-up and defence processes also affected satisfaction. While some studies have shown that instructors have a supportive and understanding attitude in these processes (Genç, & Gümrükçüoğlu, 2021) there are also studies demonstrating that the support is insufficient (Keskin & Özer Kaya, 2020; Nsengimana et al., 2021). It has been reported that during the pandemic, doctorate students needed thesis-related advisory processes more than master's students (Motte, 2020). Therefore, it seems that doctoral students are supported more by their advisers.

4.1. Study limitations

The research is limited to data from the first one-year period in which vaccine protection could not be provided during the pandemic in Türkiye. The data were based on students' self-reports, and, thus, cannot be generalized. Although the use of a convenience sampling method in the study is a limitation, reaching a sufficient sample size was evaluated positively.

In conclusion, the results revealed that the pandemic affected the education and research activities of postgraduate nursing students. There were differences between the master's and doctorate groups in terms of these activities, and students in the master's group experienced more difficulties and dissatisfaction. Master students' participation in classes and communication problems with educators can hinder their

thoughts on continuing their doctorate in the post-pandemic period. Therefore, supporting master's students with activities aimed at increasing satisfaction with consultancy support is recommended.

Organizing completion programs for educational activities that are considered inadequate according to the program studied may serve as a solution. In addition, it is necessary to evaluate the long-term impact of the pandemic process on nursing graduate programs. For this reason, longitudinal studies are recommended.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

1.GİRİŞ

Covid-19 pandemisi 2020 yılında ortaya çıkmış ve dünyada eğitim faaliyetlerini önemli ölçüde etkilemiştir. Pandemide, aşı ile korunmanın sağlanamadığı ilk bir yıllık dönemde üniversiteler uzaktan eğitim sürecine geçmiştir. Bu süreçte, lisansüstü eğitimde yüksek lisans ve doktora programları da uzaktan eğitim ile gerçekleştirilmiştir (Yamamoto & Altun, 2013).

Türkiye’de hemşirelikte lisansüstü eğitim programlarının başlangıcı 50 yıl öncesine dayanmaktadır. Hemşirelikte yüksek lisans programına 1968 yılında, doktora programına ise 1972 yılında öğrenci alınmaya başlamıştır (Kapucu & Bulut, 2019). Günümüzde üniversitelerdeki yüksek lisans program sayısı 69’a, doktora program sayısı 35’e ulaşmıştır (Özkütük, 2018). Türkiye’de 2000’li yıllardan sonra lisansüstü programlarda öğrenim gören hemşire öğrenci sayısının 5.3 kat arttığı belirtilmektedir (Council of Higher Education [CHE], 2017). 2000-2015 yılları arasında yüksek lisans programlarından yaklaşık 2788, doktora programlarından 650 olmak üzere toplam 3450 hemşire mezun olmuştur (Kocaman & Arslan Yürümezoğlu, 2015). Lisansüstü programlar iki aşamadan (ders ve tez) oluşmaktadır. Bu programların temel bileşenlerini araştırma, öğretim, klinik uygulama ve mentörlük oluşturmaktadır (Persky et al., 2020). Programların temel amacı bilgi üreten, bilgiyi kullanan ve eleştirel düşünce tarzıyla problem çözebilecek nitelikli insan gücünü yetiştirmektir (Karaman & Bakırcı, 2010). Lisansüstü hemşirelik öğrencilerinin, seçtikleri alanda bilgileri derinlemesine öğrenmeleri, analitik düşünme sürecini kullanarak hemşirelik uygulamaları için araştırma yapmaları ve bu araştırmalarda kanıt dayalı verileri kullanmaları beklenmektedir (Bahçecik & Alpar, 2009).

Pandemide internet teknolojileri kullanılarak gerçekleştirilen uzaktan eğitimin avantajlarının yanında dezavantajları da bulunmaktadır. Yapılan çalışmalar sonucunda, esnek bir öğrenme ortamı sağlama, erişilebilir olma ve ekonomik olma özellikleri uzaktan eğitimin avantajları olarak belirlenirken (Clark, 2020; Genç & Gümrükçüoğlu, 2021), dikkat dağınıklığı, motivasyon eksikliği, iletişim sorunları, internet erişimi konusunda altyapı yetersizliği, teknik sorunlar ve uygulamalı dersleri kavramada zorluklar ise dezavantajları olarak belirlenmiştir (Dhawan, 2020).

Uzaktan eğitimin, eğitim faaliyetlerine etkisi, eğitim görülen programa göre farklılık gösterebilmektedir (Genç & Gümrükçüoğlu, 2021; Nsengimana et al., 2021; Watson et al., 2020). Özellikle hemşirelik gibi uygulamalı disiplinlerde eğitimin uzaktan yürütülmesinin lisansüstü öğrenim gören öğrencilere analitik düşünme, kanıt temelli araştırmaları gerçekleştirme, alana özgü becerilerin kazandırılması gibi program hedeflerinin gerçekleştirilmesi konusunda önemli bir dezavantaj olduğu belirtilmektedir (Ergin & Şahan, 2021; Watson et al., 2020). Pandemide hemşirelik eğitiminde klinik uygulamaların ertelenmesi ile hasta etkileşimli beceri kazanımı sekteye uğramıştır (Dewart et al., 2020). Öğrenciler bu dönemde daha çok eğitimlerini tamamlayamama konusunda zaman baskısına bağlı endişe yaşamış ve motivasyonları düşmüştür (Persky et al., 2020; Watson et al., 2020). Bununla birlikte özellikle tez aşamasındaki öğrenciler eğitim programları gereği yapmaları gereken çalışma/çalışmalar için kurum izni ve etik izin alamama, veri toplayamama gibi sorunlar nedeniyle kayıt dondurmak durumunda kalmış, dönem kayıpları olmuş ve mezuniyetleri gecikmiştir (Ergin & Şahan, 2021).

Hemşirelik alanında araştırmacı yetiştirme, hemşirelik bilgisini geliştirme ve hemşirelik uygulamalarını bilimsel temele dayandırma lisansüstü eğitim programlarının kalitesi ile yakından ilişkilidir (Bahçecik & Alpar, 2009). Lisansüstü eğitimde bilimsel yetkinleşme için belirli bir eğitim sürecinin ardından bilimsel araştırma faaliyetlerini gerçekleştirmek gerekir. Bu araştırma hemşirelik alanında yüksek lisans ve doktora

programına kayıtlı öğrencilerin pandemi sürecindeki eğitim ve bilimsel araştırma faaliyetlerini, yaşadıkları zorlukları ve memnuniyetlerini belirlemek amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir.

2.YÖNTEM

Araştırma tanımlayıcı ve kesitsel tiptedir. Hemşirelik bölümlerinde lisansüstü programlarda öğrenim gören öğrenci sayılarına ilişkin en son güncel veriler göz önüne alındığında, bu programlara yeni kayıtlı ve devam eden 6.157 yüksek lisans, 1.359 doktora öğrencisi olmak üzere toplam 7516 öğrencinin bulunduğu bildirilmiştir (CHE, 2017. Literatürde $s=X2NP (1-P)÷ d2(N-1)+X2P (1-P)$ formülüne dayalı olarak evren büyüklüğüne göre ne kadar örneklem alınacağı Krejcie ve Morgan tarafından hesaplanmıştır (Ural & Kılıç, p. 47). Bu hesaplama dayalı olarak evreni temsil edecek olan örneklem hacmi 367 öğrenci olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırma çalışmaya katılmayı kabul eden, gönderilen ankete erişim sağlayabilen ve anket formunu eksiksiz bir şekilde dolduran 383 öğrenci ile tamamlanmıştır.

Araştırma verileri, katılımcıların sosyo-demografik özelliklerine, pandemi sürecinde bilimsel araştırma ve eğitim faaliyetlerinde ilişkin 29 sorudan oluşan bir anket formu ile toplanmıştır. Veriler Google Form aracılığı ile Şubat-Mart 2021 tarihleri arasında toplanmıştır. Anket formu lisansüstü hemşirelik programlara kayıtlı öğrencilere sosyal medya platformlarından (whatsapp grupları, e- posta) ulaştırılarak online olarak toplanmıştır. Veriler, SPSS 22.0 paket programı kullanılarak değerlendirilmiştir.

3. BULGULAR, TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Pandemi döneminde derslerin çoğunlukla online (yüksek lisans: %75.7; doktora: %80.6) sürdürüldüğü, yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin yarısının (%52.3), doktora öğrencilerinin yaklaşık 2/3'ünün (%71.5) pandemi sürecinde klinik uygulamalarının bulunmadığı görülmüştür (Tablo 1). Doktora eğitimi alan öğrencilerin yüksek lisans öğrencilerine göre bilimsel yayın yapma, kongreye-sempozyuma katılma ve proje görev alma oranları daha yüksek bulunmuştur (sırasıyla yüksek lisans: %18.8, %21.6, %3.7; doktora: %50.3, %44.8, %9.7) (Şekil 1).

Pandemide lisansüstü hemşirelik öğrencilerinin öğrenim gördükleri programa göre eğitim-öğretimde yaşadıkları güçlükler karşılaştırıldığında; yüksek lisans yapan öğrencilerin doktora öğrencilerine göre ders devamlılığını sürdürmede ve öğretim elemanları ile iletişime geçmede daha fazla sorun yaşadıkları, yorgunluk/tükenmişlik nedeniyle eğitim faaliyetlerine odaklanamadıkları belirlenmiştir ($p < .01$) (Tablo 2).

Doktora öğrencilerinin ders verimi, derslerin öğrenim hedeflerine ulaşması, ders başarıları, bilimsel toplantı, bilimsel araştırma ve danışmanlık faaliyetlerinden memnuniyetleri yüksek lisans öğrencilerinden daha yüksek bulunmuştur ($p < .05$). Yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin ise tez izlem ve tez savunma süreçleri ile öğretim elemanlarının eğitim öğretim ile ilgili beklentilerinden memnuniyetlerinin doktora öğrencilerine göre daha fazla olduğu görülmüştür ($p < .05$) (Tablo 3).

Pandemi lisansüstü eğitimde araştırmaların yürütülmesi, bilimsel etkinliklere katılım, bu etkinliklerin planlanması gibi bilimsel faaliyetleri sekteye uğratmıştır (Ergin & Şahan, 2021). Yürütülen çalışmada doktora programı öğrencilerinin yüksek lisans öğrencilerine göre bilimsel makale yazma, bilimsel etkinliklere katılma ve bilimsel projede görev alma oranlarının daha yüksek ve bu faaliyetlere yönelik memnuniyetlerinin daha fazla olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu durum doktora grubunun 4/5'inin üniversitede akademisyen olarak görev yapması ve bilimsel yetkinliklerinin daha fazla olması ile açıklanabilir.

Sonuç olarak pandemi lisansüstü hemşirelik öğrencilerinin eğitim ve araştırma faaliyetlerini etkilemiştir. Bu faaliyetler açısından yüksek lisans ve doktora grubu arasında fark olup yüksek lisans grubunda güçlük yaşama ve memnuniyetsizlik deneyimleri daha fazladır. Yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin derslere katılım güçlükleri ve eğitimcilerle iletişim sorunları, pandemi sonrası dönemde doktoralarına devam etme düşüncelerini engelleyebilmektedir. Bu nedenle yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin danışmanlık desteğinden memnuniyetlerini artırmaya yönelik planlamalar yapılmalıdır. Öğrenim görülen programa göre yetersiz görülen eğitim-öğretim etkinliklerine yönelik tamamlama programlarının düzenlenmesi faydalı olabilir.

The Impact of the Pandemic on Postgraduate Nursing Students: Comparison of Master's and Doctorate Studies

(Pandeminin Lisansüstü Hemşirelik Öğrencileri Üzerindeki Etkisi: Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Çalışmalarının Karşılaştırılması)

Ayrıca pandemi sürecinin hemşirelik lisansüstü programlarına uzun vadeli etkisinin değerlendirilmesi gerekmektedir. Bu nedenle boylamsal çalışmaların yapılması önerilmektedir.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

In this study, all rules stated to be followed within the scope of the “Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive” were followed. None of the actions specified under the title of “Actions Violating Scientific Research and Publication Ethics,” which is the second part of the directive, have not been carried out

Ethics committee permission information

Ethical committee: Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University Social Sciences Ethics Committee for Human Research

Data of ethical approval: 01.02.2021

The number of ethical approvals: 2021/38

The study was approved also the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Health, COVID-19 Scientific Research Platform (date: January 20, 2021). Informed consent was presented to the students on the initial page of the questionnaire, and only the students who agreed to participate in the research were able to continue the survey.

CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCHERS

NÇB: Concept, Design, Supervision, Data Collection and/or Processing, Analysis and/or Interpretation, Literature Search, Writing Manuscript, Critical Review

MB: Concept, Design, Supervision, Data Collection and/or Processing, Analysis and/or Interpretation, Literature Search, Writing Manuscript, Critical Review

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All the authors have given final approval of the version to be submitted.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.