



## Original Article

# The investigation of nursing student's opinions about symbolic violence towards patients

Bahanur Malak Akgün,<sup>1</sup> Adeviye Aydın<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Nursing, Ardahan University Faculty of Health Sciences, Ardahan, Türkiye

<sup>2</sup>Department of Nursing, Sinop University Faculty of Health Sciences, Sinop, Türkiye

### Abstract

**Objectives:** This study was aimed to investigate the views of the nursing students regarding the newspaper news that contain symbolic violence conducted against the patients in the institution.

**Methods:** A qualitative descriptive study was conducted with 33 undergraduate nursing students at a University in Türkiye, who studied Nursing Ethics courses to examine views on symbolic violence. In the research, the newspaper news that contain symbolic violence against the patients which were published between the years 2013-2018 have been utilized. Participants were included in the study using purposive sampling method. The views of nursing students who volunteered were included in the study have been gathered regarding the question structured accordingly to the six selected news. The research materials were provided to students in the computer. These responses were Word file submissions. In data analysis, researchers firstly identified independent themes and sub-themes. Then, common themes and sub-themes were determined.

**Results:** The main themes were as follows: "The causes of symbolic violence", "education: raising awareness", "field rules", "feelings on events". Related to news where ethical problems occurred, students stated that those nurses tend to show symbolic violence due to lack of professional knowledge. According to the students, images containing symbolic violence were shared for entertainment purposes within the team and on social media. The most students did not know about the laws and regulations of Türkiye related the nursing profession. Most of the students participating in the study stated that they do not have sufficient knowledge about the laws and regulations related to the nursing profession in Türkiye.

**Conclusion:** The views of nursing students on symbolic violence behaviors were determined. According to the opinions, the symbolic violence applied to the patients is due to reasons such as not being able to gain a nursing habitus, experiencing depersonalization, getting social approval, and individual characteristics. Awareness programs for symbolic violence and its causes should be established and students should be adequately educated about the ethical values of nursing in the curriculum.

**Keywords:** Nursing student; patient safety; symbolic violence.

Prescribed by the Republic of Türkiye, patient security—as defined in the regulations of patient and employee safety—comprises of "actions to be taken regarding all kinds of procedures and processes that may cause harm to patients in health service delivery". In the legal context, nurses, along with other health personnel, have been held responsible for ensuring patient safety.<sup>(1)</sup> Nursing is a meaningful, therapeutic

and interpersonal process aimed at the well-being of individual and health development. In this process, the role of the nurse should be evaluated in terms of patient safety and patient rights advocacy.

In this regard, measures are taken through the implementation of various sanctions. However, symbolic violence, which is a crucial aspect of patient safety, is difficult to prevent due

**Address for correspondence:** Bahanur Malak Akgün, Ardahan Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi, Hemşirelik Bölümü, Ardahan, Türkiye

**Phone:** +90 543 915 88 46 **E-mail:** bahnur\_mk@hotmail.com **ORCID:** 0000-0001-7151-0145

**Submitted Date:** July 14, 2021 **Revised Date:** May 25, 2022 **Accepted Date:** June 19, 2022 **Available Online Date:** December 22, 2022

©Copyright 2022 by Journal of Psychiatric Nursing - Available online at www.phdergi.org



**What is presently known on this subject?**

- Symbolic violence's a kind form of violence which is unclear, unnoticeable. It effects negative on health and internalization of sense of worthlessness.

**What does this article add to the existing knowledge?**

- Inability to gain nursing habitus, individual characteristics: inability to have primary habitus prone to gain nursing habitus, social approval, depersonalization are causes of symbolic violence. Related to news where ethical problems occurred, students stated that those nurses tend to show symbolic violence due to lack of professional knowledge.

**What are the implications for practice?**

- With the Bourdieu theory the social context of the reasons for not providing patient safety have been understood. And also, it is very valuable for nursing students to recognize symbolic violent behaviors before taking part in the working life, and to gain the skills to prevent these behaviors.

to various forms. Symbolic violence is a polite form of violence—vague, unnoticeable, unseen by its victims, often used for understanding, knowing, communicating, and even through symbolic channels of emotions.<sup>[2]</sup> It is a concept that emphasizes social practices during the daily rituals of institutionalized social stratification and the maintenance of order.<sup>[3]</sup> In this context, symbolic violence is a very important mechanism based on social order and maintains the hierarchy of hegemony (one over another).<sup>[4]</sup> It is a type of violence that is present in all aspects of life. People who are exposed to symbolic violence are either not aware of it, or remain silent because they have no power to resist the hegemony of the hierarchy.<sup>[2]</sup>

Symbolic violence leads to social distress, and as a result, negative health and well-being.<sup>[5,6]</sup> In particular, it has negative effects on the health and well-being of disadvantaged people, such as those who are stressed and have low self-esteem.<sup>[6]</sup> It may cause patients and individuals to internalize the feeling of worthlessness conveyed to them by the institution<sup>[7]</sup> and in this manner, it continues to maintain the inequality.<sup>[2]</sup>

Symbolic violence has a strong relationship with the media, which is a medium of discourse. In many ways, social media can offer symbolic violence, or “superpowers”. Social media can constitute a key point where discourse is multiplied in addition to the contents of violence.<sup>[8,9]</sup> Symbolic violence is not always clear,<sup>[9]</sup> and when it occurs on social media, can hinder the freedom of individuals by humiliating them without considering the rights of others.

Violence is learned through can produce negative results, such as depersonalization.<sup>[10]</sup> However, symbolic violence is not always clear.<sup>[9]</sup> The victim's need to address family, work, and friends in the social network leads to the need for individuals to transfer every action they perform.<sup>[11]</sup> This situation is not only limited to social lives, but can expand and lead to one that encompasses professional life, transcending ethical boundaries and turning into symbolic violence.<sup>[12]</sup>

**Objectives**

Based on the need to act in accordance with the principles

and ethics of patient safety, it will be necessary to increase awareness of symbolic violence situations, and to consider nursing students' views in determining the necessary prevention strategies. However, despite scouring research on patients exposed to symbolic violence, studies investigating nursing students' views were found to be lacking. Therefore, the study was aimed to investigate the views of the nursing students regarding the newspaper news that contain symbolic violence conducted against the patients in the institution.

**Theoretical Framework**

The concepts of symbolic violence, habitus, space, and capital that Pierre Bourdieu discussed, are emphasized in the theoretical structure of this research. Bourdieu's theory contributed to and enriched health care fields and nursing practices.<sup>[13,14]</sup> Bourdieu states that symbolic violence occurs as a result of habitus (predispositions, tendencies) of individuals without any physical power.<sup>[15]</sup> Habitus has an important function in the formation of symbolic violence, symbolic violence can be identified by habitual behavior<sup>[4]</sup> and it is argued that these behaviors can be apparent in social media.<sup>[16]</sup> The fulfilling of symbolic violence in a hidden, unconscious way and the internalization of the individual would cause it to be transferred to the care area as in all areas of life.<sup>[17]</sup> The fact that nurses whether they are aware of it or not, record the symbolic violence, with videos or photographs and share them on social media may be a reflection of the nurses' exhaustion and desire to be valued.<sup>[18]</sup>

Nursing capital includes the theoretical knowledge, practical experience on professional standards, ethical principles, goals and values, professional care behaviors, responsibilities, and duties adopted by the nursing profession. The bases of nursing capital are laid in nursing education. Symbolic violence, which is one of the unprofessional behaviors can occur when this capital is not gained.<sup>[18,19]</sup>

**Materials and Method****Design**

Qualitative descriptive research design was used to examine undergraduate students' views on symbolic violence. For the reporting of this research, the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) was implemented.<sup>[20]</sup>

**Setting**

The study was conducted with 33 undergraduate nursing students in the Department of Nursing at a University in Türkiye, who studied Nursing Ethics courses. As these courses also include content on ethical principles, students with knowledge on these subjects are selected for the sample. 3rd and 4th-grade students take part in the research since they took deontology and ethics courses in previous years. Because this criterion of students' ability to evaluate the symbolic violent behaviors of nurses, was determined by the researchers be-

fore the research. The purpose of the research and the criteria for inclusion, regarding the participation of the students in the research, were first announced in the classrooms and the participants were invited. The sample was achieved by using purposeful sampling method. First, the students were given information about the research, and in line with the ethical principles, students were not forced but students who volunteered were included in the study.

Symbolic violence is difficult to prove by its formation.<sup>[2]</sup> Examples of representation of symbolic violence are revealed through journalistic practices such as news articles, photo selections, news discourses, and news language.<sup>[21]</sup> The nurses' actions that contain symbolic violence have been discussed through the utilization of Bourdieu's theory in the selection of newspaper news. These actions are a set of behaviors that do not correspond with nursing philosophy, professionalism, and ethical principles.<sup>[2]</sup> In this respect, to make the study robust, researchers selected six news on the subject—published between January 1, 2013 and March 1, 2018—from three prominent newspapers with leading sales circulation between January 1, 2013 and March 1, 2018. The contents of the news can be summarized as follows. Four news were about nurses who took selfies with semi-nude and unconscious patients in intensive care and operating rooms, and shared these photos on social media. Other two news item reported on visual content shared on social media by nurses who were dancing while caring for patients in an intensive care unit. In this context, photographs and news that were representative of symbolic violence by nurses towards patients were used. We can summarize this example of a news as follows; *A nurse took pictures of the patients who were being treated, shared them on his/her social media account and made a comment under the photo on social media saying "A picture of the near-deads". After the news was published, the nurse said in a statement, "they were all shot in my young years, out of ignorance."*

Nursing students included in the research sample were informed about the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary, that the results were to be used for scientific purposes only, and that they could exit the study at any time if desired; hereafter, students participated by signing the informed consent forms included in the study. The researcher stated that no interest relationship with the students had been sought before the study in terms of participation in the research and that it was completely based on voluntariness. Also, information including the identity of the students was not obtained during the application process of the research. Next, participants were asked to respond in detail to structured questions regarding the newspaper news; these responses could be handwritten or Word file submissions. The research materials were provided to students in the computer. The sample size could not be determined in accordance with the qualitative research design; therefore, until saturation was reached in the findings of the answers provided by the students, they were continued to be included in the sample and asked to answer questions.

## Data Collection

After a brief information session about the research, written and verbal consent was obtained from participants. Students answered structured questions on the Descriptive Information Form and newspaper news in a Microsoft Word file. The study was conducted on the university's computers. Each participant first read the news on the computer assigned to them and then answered research questions. In order to prevent students from being influenced by each other and enable them to easily express their thoughts, researcher A.A. ensured a quiet environment while participants expressed their individual opinions through written responses. The environment where data collection took place was a comfortable environment where participants could respond easily, physically suitable and not affected by each other. In order for the participants did not to feel nervous, strict rules were not established in the environment. While answering the interview questions in the research, an exam atmosphere was not created. Students easily reached the researcher. Each participant was requested to answer the questions once. No repeated data was collected from the participants. The main advantages of obtaining written data include enabling participants to express their feelings and thoughts freely, simultaneously allowing for a larger number of participants, and facilitating the data collection and analysis process. The questions that were answered by the new students were ceased when the researches believed that the themes were repeating and the data saturation was obtained as a result of the discussions based on written records. Data evaluation could not be provided while nursing students answered structured questions about the news. After the answers of the participants were collected, the opinions were examined. Until data saturation was achieved, we continued to reach the participants. Data saturation was achieved with 29 students, and also four more participants were conducted. While the Word file containing nursing students opinions was stored in the data collecting, the researcher quickly reviewed their answers and examined whether there were any incomprehensible sentence structures. Incomprehensible sentences were promptly asked to the participants. This collection of research data took place in April 2018; the session lasted for approximately an hour, and all participants completed the study. There is no limitation/restriction regarding the duration of the research. It took approximately 1 hour for the students to answer the questions.

## Structured Questions on the News

The questions were structured by the researchers in light of the literature. They were based on the concepts containing symbolic violence in Pierre Bourdieu's theory, nursing purpose, values, ethical principles, and basic nursing principals.<sup>[2]</sup> Each one of them is composed of open-ended questions that ensure the students to express their thoughts (Table 1). In order to elicit nursing students' opinions on the newspaper news representative of symbolic violence, the form consisted of questions determined by researchers relating to causes of

**Table 1. Structured questions on the news articles**

1. In the cases which were displayed in newspaper articles, how would you define the nurses' behaviors in this manner towards the patients?
2. Why do you think the nurses treated patients in this manner?
3. In your opinion, which of the following could the nurses not acquire; nursing purpose, nursing values, ethical principles, and basic nursing principles?
4. Why do you think these nurses failed to acquire the ones that you have describes as 'not-acquired' above among the nursing purpose, nursing values, ethical values, and basic nursing principals?
5. In your opinion, why did the nurses record their behaviors in that manner towards the patients?
6. Why do you think the nurses have shared these shots with their friends or posted them on social networking sites?
7. What would you do if you were to encounter a situation that is similar to these newspaper articles in your clinical application? Or have you ever encountered a situation similar to these newspaper articles in your clinical application, and what did you do in this situation?
8. Have you read these articles in the newspaper before? How did you feel and what did you think when you read them? If this is the first time that you are encountering such articles, how do you feel and what do you think?
9. To your mind, what is the reason for these shots to be taken in closed units such as intensive care and operating room instead of a polyclinic or any other service?
10. In your opinion, how could the awareness be raised in nurses regarding not to treat patients in this manner?
11. What do you think the three most important qualities are that should be possessed by nurses?
12. In your view, what sort of sanctions should be imposed upon the nurses in these articles by the hospital management or the ministry of health?
13. Do you know what kind of legal penalties are imposed upon nurses who behave in such manners according to the laws of the Republic of Türkiye? If you do know, please write them.

such behavior by nurses, specifically, taking photos of patients and then sharing the content on social media.

### Ethical Approval

In order to perform the study, firstly, permission of the Human Research Ethics Committee (numbered 2018/25 and dated 04.04.2018), and subsequently, from the institution where the research was going to be conducted, was obtained. Thereafter, data collection instruments were applied to nursing students who provided verbal and written consent to participate. They were assisted so that every single of them could reach the research materials in their personal computers, and no difficulty was experienced. Also, the researcher directly helped participants, and the students were able to easily ask anything regarding the study to the researcher. The researcher paid attention not to affect the students' thoughts while answering their questions.

### Data Analysis

After students answered structured questions relating to the news, content analysis was employed to interpret the obtained data. Each participant received a number. While organizing the data in the content analysis and concluding, the researchers considered four stages. These were decontextualization, the recontextualization, the categorization, and the compilation. In decontextualization, which is the first stage, they read the data that was in text format independently of each other many times. At the next stage, considering the theoretical substructure regarding the concept of symbolic violence in line with the researcher's target, the pertinent data was marked. And in the third stage, themes and sub-themes

were categorized. The established themes and sub-themes were written down in the last stage, and the process was completed.<sup>[22]</sup> The direct conveyance of the participants' (from the primary source) views to the findings section was ensured as a criterion for ensuring the reliability of the research.

According to the literature, researchers independently read, coded, and identified each other's themes and sub-themes.<sup>[23]</sup> Common themes and sub-themes obtained were determined; uncommon themes were then evaluated, after which the research took its final shape.

### Results

Of the students participating in the study, 17 (51.5%) were aged 22, 6 (18.3%) were aged 21, 4 (12.1%) were aged 23, 4 (12.1%) were aged 24, 1 (3%) was aged 31, 1 (3%) was aged 34; 27 (81.88%) were female and 6 (18.2%) were male. 16 students (48.5%) were living in the dormitory, 13 (39.4%) were living at home with housemate, three students (9.1%) were living lonely at home and a student (3%) was living with family. Further, 19 students (57.6%) had willingly chosen the nursing profession, 10 students (30.3%) had partially willingly chosen it, 3 students (9.1%) were indecisive, and 1 student (3%) had chosen the profession involuntarily. Students were asked whether they experienced difficulty in their relationships with patients in their clinical applications. This question led the students to provide an evaluation of their interpersonal relationships in their applications before the newspaper news. A total of 23 students (69.7%) stated that they had no difficulties in their relations with patients during clinical practice. Otherwise 10 students (30.3%) stated that they had some difficulties in their relations with patients during clinical practice.



As a result of the analysis of the students' answers to the structured questions—constructed with the aim of examining their views on patients—the themes of “Causes of Symbolic Violence”, “Education: Raising Awareness”, “Field Rules”, “Feelings on Events”.

### Causes of Symbolic Violence

#### a. Inability to gain nursing habitus

Related to news where ethical problems occurred, students stated that those nurses tend to show symbolic violence due to lack of professional knowledge. Students concluded that nurses in these cases could not achieve professional responsibility as a result of the inadequate ethical sensitivity therefore could not comprehend the seriousness of the professional services they provided. However, according to students, all these problems were based on the willingness to choose the profession.

They have not fully understood the essence and ethics of this profession. (Participant 21)

They may have no awareness that publishing and keeping such records was crime. Even if it was known, they may have ignored the ethical principles because they have not adopted ethical principles in the first place. (Participant 29)

They did not care about the education received at school and could not comprehend the seriousness of this profession. (Participant 10)

...they did not fully understand the responsibilities and seriousness of the profession. Most likely, they did not voluntarily choose the profession of nursing. (Participant 26)

#### b. Individual characteristics: Inability to have primary habitus prone to gain nursing habitus

Students stated that nurses should have individual characteristics including some humanitarian values to gain nursing habitus. They also emphasized that humanitarian values should be adopted by everyone regardless of the profession adopted. In the literature, these individual characteristics are defined as primary habitus. The primary habitus influences individual perspective, decision making, world view, secondary, and occupational habitus.<sup>[24]</sup> According to students, they do not have professional awareness because they do not have these individual characteristics.

According to their personalities, people who work in the wrong field may not be able to realize it. (Participant 17)

First, people should learn senses of tolerance, conscientiousness, and benevolence. After that, professional ethics and occupational awareness should be gained. (Participant 19)

#### c. Social approval

According to participants, symbolic violence was applied by the nurses as being fun within the team and when shared on

social media. Students stated that in teamwork where social interaction occurs, nurses tend to be involved in or remain silent on symbolic violence to keep pace with the team and avoid exclusion. Students emphasized that social interaction in the virtual environment can be also effective in the application of symbolic violence.

To draw attention and show themselves in social media. The only thing that society now thinks is to be appreciated in social media. (Participant 9)

... They may have thought that these situations where they had fun could be perceived as fun by others... may be due to their colleagues. (Participant 25)

#### d. Depersonalization

Participants stated that the nurses disregarded the patients and did not show the necessary care to the patients because they perceive the patients' condition as an ordinary situation. It was emphasized that they exhibited these behaviors because they wanted to deal with their feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy and be understood by others. Nursing students concluded that in these cases where symbolic violence was exhibited, nurses wanted to be at the center of attention by attracting attention and prioritizing their needs over those of the patient.

The first thing that comes to my mind as the reason why nurses behave in this way to patients is the fact that the nurses are constantly dealing with patients and they became very ordinary for nurses... (Participant 1)

They may have wanted their relatives to see their profession which they love so much, in which they work hard, become tired, exhausted... They may have thought that these situations, where they had fun, could be perceived as enjoyable by others. (Participant 25)

### Education: Raising Awareness

Students made some suggestions about raising awareness of the individuals who have the competence and characteristics to gain the principles, values, and responsibilities of the nursing profession, but who still may have tendency to apply symbolic violence. These recommendations are raising awareness of the importance of the aims and values of nursing profession, ethical principles, ability for empathy, a sense of belonging to profession, and love for the profession. It was emphasized that legal regulations and sanctions should be taught. It was stated that before creating professional awareness, it is necessary to teach people how to be conscientious, helpful, and tolerant and empower them with the ability of empathy. It was emphasized that vocational education should be at the university level.

More training should be given on ethical principles and interns who should be warned and monitored when necessary. (Participant 10)

First of all, people should learn the sense of tolerance, conscientiousness, and benevolence. After that, professional ethics and occupational awareness should be gained. (Participant 19)

### Field Rules

In the theme of field rules, it was determined that most students did not know about the laws and regulations of the Republic of Türkiye related to the nursing profession. Students who did not know the laws and regulations have made suggestions about the kinds of precautions that can be taken and punishments that can be applied. These suggestions are that nurses could continue their occupations under surveillance and in the units where communication with patients is limited.

Dismissal from the profession, pecuniary punishment. (Participant 8)

Punishments like dislocation, forfeiture of pay, dismissal from profession, reprimands, and warnings can be applied. (Participant 18)

### Feelings on Events

After the students read the news, they stated that they had a feeling of sympathy for the patients and their relatives, therefore they were upset, annoyed, embarrassed and discomforted. Students have expressed that the society can feed negative feelings and thoughts towards nurses and that their trust may be shaken and therefore the prestige of the profession can be damaged.

"Yes, I saw it on the news, and I got so angry when I saw it. The fact that the people who did this were nurses made me embarrassed." (Participant 3)

"... What I saw made me think that such people harm the profession of nursing and negatively affect the public opinion of the profession. Also, it made me think that there was no respect to human health and privacy, and that healthcare workers could not be trusted." (Participant 18)

### Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate views of nursing students on symbolic violence against patients. Students identified characteristics that nurses should have as a part of their professional identity in the context of nursing habitus. Nursing habitus is related to concepts of patient safety, role of patient rights advocacy, nursing ethical principles, positive values, empathy, and sympathy. Students expressed that a prerequisite of the nursing profession was the ability to empathize, therefore, one of the reasons for symbolic violence is the lack of empathy in an ethical understanding of care. In other words, they argue that care is essential in human life and that ethical principles must be at the basis of decision-making processes in health care.<sup>[25]</sup> Nursing students gain professional values such as compassion and empathy during their education and care practices.<sup>[26]</sup>

Students stated that nurses should adopt ethical principles in order to embrace the nursing profession and provide quality care. Moreover, they listed the ethical principles violated by nurses in the news stories: confidentiality, autonomy, honesty, integrity, and not to cause harm.

Digby et al.<sup>[27]</sup> found that nurses who have a strong understanding of care ethics showed resistance to the clinical habitus effect and refused to adopt a derogatory attitude towards the vulnerable group. An objective evaluation or a critical approach will enable nurses or students to rationally evaluate both themselves and others' behavior in terms of care. However, defining the normative and moral aspect of care is as difficult as defining symbolic violence.<sup>[28]</sup> In this respect, it is difficult to determine whether ethical principles are applied in care, just as if symbolic violence has indeed occurred or not. Students demonstrated that they could comprehend constructing these definitions.

Patients' rights as a requirement of the role of patient advocacy with a nursing role should be advocated by nurses.<sup>[29]</sup> Being in a safe environment is related to human rights, and that environments with symbolic violence are neither healthy nor safe. In order to prevent symbolic violence, "not to do harm" and "confidentiality" should be emphasized in terms of patient safety.<sup>[4,30]</sup> By championing the role of patient rights advocacy, patient safety should be ensured. Therefore, the tendency of nurse habitus influences the clinical leadership of nurses in patient safety practices.<sup>[31]</sup> In a study conducted with health workers, it was determined that nurses often encountered problems such as the application of belief, conscience, and moral values.<sup>[32]</sup> Having the support of management should be among the primary objectives in ensuring a safe environment so that patients would not get exposed to symbolic violent situations, and that nurses would not face professional ethical problems and dilemmas. Supervision must be provided to nurses for the development of their skills of empathy, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

Students stressed that nurses should have certain individual characteristics that include human values that allow them to gain a nursing habitus. However, there is an unintentional selection of the profession on the basis of symbolic violence. This is because performing nursing effectively depends on the students' attitudes, abilities, and qualifications or individual characteristics in gaining the necessary skills and habitus for nursing.<sup>[3,33]</sup> Students stated that societies are currently moving away from humanitarian values globally. Reljić et al.<sup>[34]</sup> highlighted that reflective learning can emphasize and evaluate the humanizing characteristics of care. Reflective practices can contribute to a humane value framework for healthcare by evaluating the uniqueness and specificity of both the practitioners and the patients.<sup>[34,35]</sup> Reflective learning can be used in the education of nursing students as a symbolic violence prevention strategy.

According to participants, the primary characteristics of a nurse are to be responsible, conscientious, and helpful, where-

as nurses in these newspaper reports do not possess these individual characteristics. Accordingly if nurses are conscientious and helpful, they can achieve professional consciousness by adopting ethical principles, professional values, and goals, because benevolent people can address others' problems, and realize the ethical principle of benefiting, and thus, reduce the likelihood of harming others.<sup>[36]</sup> The individual characteristic of being helpful and responsible is related to the value of altruism in the nursing profession.<sup>[37,38]</sup> Training of altruism through education can be achieved by encouraging positive qualities such as compassion, empathy, self-understanding, motivation, and awareness on the basis of altruism.<sup>[38]</sup>

The students suggested that the nurses tried to draw attention by bringing their needs into the foreground. In contrast, a professional is a person who attends to the interests of his/her patients with moral obligation,<sup>[28]</sup> hence, nurses offer ethical care without disregarding the wishes of patients. Ethical care involves providing the well-being or needs of the individual, taking responsibility for actions, and embodying affection and compassion.<sup>[25]</sup> This understanding agrees with Bessen et al.<sup>[39]</sup> who says that compassionate caregivers should be able to respond to the patient's needs. Henderson and Jones<sup>[40]</sup> stated that individuals who are most suitable for the nursing profession are those who have compassionate behaviors, and that such behaviors should be increasingly developed in nursing students.

Students argued that the nurses tended to get involved in the symbolic violence or stay silent about such acts in order to be a part of the team and not be excluded from social interaction. Therefore, in order to ensure quality care practices, nurses want to be supported by management to use their autonomy or individual resources to reject inhumane practices in their primary habitus.<sup>[41]</sup>

Students also stated that nurses experienced depersonalization; for example, violence can be learned through the media and can lead to depersonalization in individuals.<sup>[10]</sup> As symbolic violence is an instrument of social control,<sup>[4]</sup> nurses may use it to prove to themselves, patients, and other health staff, that they are in control at the clinic. In addition, respondents concluded that the nurses wanted to expose the conditions of the healthcare profession and therefore, were trying to meet their needs of being understood—even seeing value in their actions. In other words, the depersonalization of the nurses may be related to burnout or violence learned through the media. In this context, students were able to establish the link between depersonalization and social approval, which were included in the theme specifying causes of symbolic violence.

Students proposed to raise awareness about the purpose and values of the nursing profession, ethical principles, empathy ability, sense of professional belonging, and the importance of passion for the profession. According to students, legal sanctions should be properly taught and closely monitored to ensure that nurses with external control behave in accordance with professional principles. When necessary, it is suggested to

give insight about the attitudes of people through supervision during professional practices. There is a need to support and promote internal structures that will enable the development of a compassionate care habitus,<sup>[41]</sup> as compassion creates a desire to help others.<sup>[38,39]</sup> It is a philosophy that forms the basis of nursing and prevents behaviors such as being harmful, destructive and even cruel.<sup>[40,42]</sup>

Most students revealed that they were unfamiliar with patient rights and legal regulations related to the nursing profession in the field rules (the doxa of the field) theme. Precautions are taken in terms of patient safety with various sanctions in the legal context, as the doxa (ideas) is a reproduction field of symbolic violence.<sup>[4,30]</sup> In this context, according to Cuijpers and Brown<sup>[21]</sup> policy interventions are of vital importance in such cases of violence. This is also a political issue that requires joint action from professionals and society against the current economy of savings.<sup>[41]</sup>

Students expressed negative emotions such as shame, irritability, and feeling disturbed by the nurses' behaviors. Even if the deterioration of professional image is used for personal purposes in the sub-theme, it is understood that online sharing can affect the professional image of nursing, relationships with colleagues, and the reputation of the institution it serves.<sup>[18,43]</sup> Cuijpers and Brown<sup>[21]</sup> evaluated newspaper reports with qualitative analysis and found that news covering aggressive behaviors of ambulance personnel in the media included labeling, systemic, and symbolic violence. In these cases, social media reacted positively, and removed the violent content. In Türkiye, more detailed studies are required in the future on the use of social media, specifically, nurses using social media, with the preparation of guidelines to provide more efficient and conscious use. Thus, nurses could benefit from the possibilities of social media without fear of harm to their profession, colleagues, patients and the institution they serve.<sup>[12]</sup> These guidelines should be included in nursing education curricula.

Symbolic violence is not always visible/clear.<sup>[9]</sup> Symbolic violent behaviors can be observed in health care settings as well as in all areas of life.<sup>[17]</sup> Through social media, which plays a mediator role in revealing habitual behaviors,<sup>[16]</sup> it is obvious that symbolic violence is inflicted by nurses on patients in the field of nursing. For this reason, nurses should perform nursing services in a professional manner by ensuring patient safety and gain the ability to use social media effectively and consciously.<sup>[44]</sup> In addition, nurses, health sciences educators, health care professionals, and politicians should recognize symbolic violent behaviors that are against ethical values and principles along with patients' rights and safety and have an active role in preventing this form of violence. It is very valuable for nursing students to recognize symbolic violent behaviors before taking part in the working life, and to gain the skills to prevent these behaviors. Through this study, students have understood the forms and causes of symbolic violence applied to the patients by nurses.

## Conclusion

In the study, the opinions of nursing students on symbolic violence and its causes were determined. According to the respondents, the main reason for symbolic violence is that nurses have unwillingly chosen the profession and cannot be empathetic. The occupational identity characteristics of a nurse are related to the concepts of patient safety, and the role of nursing patient advocacy, ethical principles of nursing, positive values, empathy and sympathy. It was determined that students could comprehend ethical principles, and thus conclude that the nurses lacked individual characteristics that would facilitate their gaining of professional identity, including humanitarian values, responsibility, conscientiousness, and being helpful.

It was determined that nurses may not care about the patients, or may not be able to care for patients as this situation is common in the profession; furthermore, they may exhibit these behaviors because they want to confront their feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy, and hence look to satisfy the need to be understood by others. Therefore, it is determined that nurses want to draw attention to themselves but may project their needs on the center rather than the individual. According to students, the depersonalization of nurses may be related to burnout or due to violence learned through the media.

Most students were not aware of patient rights and laws and legalities related to nursing profession. It has been determined that students feel negative emotions such as shame and irritability, as well as mentally disturbed by such nurses' behaviors. Additionally, these kinds of behaviors from the nurses may cause professional image deterioration. And also, with the Bourdieu theory the social context of the reasons for not providing patient safety have been understood. It is recommended that in the nursing education curriculum, the information about the use of social media and ethical values should be handled comprehensively and the curriculum should be enriched in this matter.

## Limitations

The research has a few limitations. The research was carried out in a university, and the participants were included in the study on a voluntary basis and in line with the research criteria. Therefore, current findings cannot be generalized to all nursing students. However, data satisfaction has been achieved. The data was evaluated within the framework of the symbolic violence concept in accordance with Pierre Bordieu's theory.

**Conflict of interest:** There are no relevant conflicts of interest to disclose.

**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

**Authorship contributions:** Concept – B.M.A., A.A.; Design – B.M.A., A.A.; Supervision – B.M.A., A.A.; Fundings – B.M.A., A.A.; Materials – B.M.A., A.A.; Data collection &/or processing – B.M.A., A.A.;

Analysis and/or interpretation – B.M.A., A.A.; Literature search – B.M.A., A.A.; Writing – B.M.A., A.A.; Critical review – B.M.A., A.A.

## References

1. Ministry of Health. Regulation on ensuring patient and employee safety. 2011. Available at: <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2011/04/20110406-3.htm>. Accessed Dec 20, 2022.
2. Bourdieu P, Passeron JC. *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage Publications; 2000.
3. Malak-Akgün B. The field of care work and habitus. *J Psychiatric Nurs* 2019;10:143–8.
4. Wiegmann WL. Habitus, symbolic violence, and reflexivity: Applying bourdieu's theories to social work. *J Soc Soc Welfare* 2017;44:95–116.
5. Richardson ET, Kelly JD, Sesay O, Drasher MD, Desai IK, Frankfurter R, et al. "The symbolic violence of 'outbreak': A mixed-methods, quasi-experimental impact evaluation of social protection on Ebola survivor wellbeing." *Soc Sci Med* 2017;195:77–82.
6. Moore R. Inequalities and health disadvantage. In: Cooke H, Philpin S, editors. *Sociology in nursing and healthcare*. Philadelphia: Bailliere Tindall; 2008.
7. Johnson M. Power and communication in healthcare. In: Cooke H, Philpin S, editors. *Sociology in nursing and healthcare*. Philadelphia: Bailliere Tindall; 2008.
8. Mengü M, Mengü S. Violence and social media. *Athens J Mass Media Comm* 2015;1:211–28.
9. Recuero R. Social media and symbolic violence. *Soc Media Soc* 2015.
10. Zorlu Y. Violence in media and its effects. *Humanit Sci* 2016;11:13–32.
11. Orehek E, Human LJ. Self-expression on social media: Do tweets present accurate and positive portraits of impulsivity, self-esteem, and attachment style? *Pers Soc Psychol Bull* 2017;43:60–70.
12. Çobaner AA, Işık T. Discussing the benefits and risks of social media use among nurses in the context of medical ethics. *Turk J Bioeth* 2014;1:137–48.
13. Carter M. Vocation and altruism in nursing: The habits of practice. *Nurs Ethics* 2014;21:695–706.
14. Oerther S, Oerther DB. Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice offers nurses a framework to uncover embodied knowledge of patients living with disabilities or illnesses: A discussion paper. *J Adv Nurs* 2018;74:818–26.
15. Bourdieu P. *Eril Tahakküm*. Yılmaz B, Çeviri editörü. 2. Baskı. İstanbul: Bağlam Publications; 2015.
16. Fenwick T. Social media and medical professionalism: Rethinking the debate and the way forward. *Acad Med* 2014;89:1331–4.
17. Yılmaz C. Bourdieu's fundamental concepts and analysis of symbolic violence. *Habitus J Soci* 2020;1:161–79.
18. De Gagne JC, Hall K, Conklin JL, Yamane SS, Wyman Roth N, Chang J, et al. Uncovering cyberincivility among nurses and nursing students on Twitter: A data mining study. *Int J Nurs*



- Stud 2019;89:24–31.
19. Marnocha S, Marnocha MR, Pilliow T. Unprofessional content posted online among nursing students. *Nurse Educ* 2015;40:119–23.
  20. Tong A, Sainsbury P, Craig J. Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): A 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. *Int J Qual Health Care* 2007;19:349–57.
  21. Cuijpers N, Brown PR. Symbolic And systemic violence in media representations of aggression towards ambulance personnel in the Netherlands. *Soci Health Vuln* 2016;7:28669.
  22. Bengtsson M. How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. *NursingPlus Open* 2016;2:8–14.
  23. Creswell JW. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. 4th ed. California: Sage Publications; 2014.
  24. Hirvonen H. Habitus and care. Investigating welfare service workers' agency. In: Kotkavirta J, Olsbo P, Hautala T, editors. *Caring habitus*. Finland: Jyväskylä University Printing House; 2014.
  25. Urban LD, Dineen KK. Ethical and legal issues in critical care. In: Urden LD, Stacy KM, Lough ME, editors. *Priorities and Critical Care Nursing*. Canada: Elsevier Mosby; 2016.
  26. Msiska G, Smith P, Fawcett T. Exposing emotional labour experienced by nursing students during their clinical learning experience: A malawian perspective. *Int J Africa Nurs Sci* 2014;1:43–50.
  27. Digby R, Lee S, Williams A. The 'unworthy' patient with dementia in geriatric rehabilitation hospitals. *Collegian* 2018;25:377–83.
  28. Emmerich N, Swinglehurst D, Maybin J, Park S, Quilligan S. Caring for quality of care: Symbolic violence and the bureaucracies of audit. *BMC Med Ethics* 2015;16:23.
  29. Smith MC, Parker ME. *Nursing theories and nursing practice*. 4th ed. Philadelphia: Davis Company; 2015.
  30. Waring A. The five pillars of occupational safety & health in a context of authoritarian socio-political climates. *Safety Sci* 2019;117:152–63.
  31. Lalleman PC, Smid GA, Lagerwey MD, Shortridge-Baggett LM, Schuurmans MJ. Curbing the urge to care: A Bourdieusian analysis of the effect of the caring disposition on nurse middle managers' clinical leadership in patient safety practices. *Int J Nurs Stud* 2016;63:179–88.
  32. Akbal A, Kasapoğlu A. Transformation of health in Turkey: Resistance strategies of health workers towards symbolic violence. *Biomed J Sci Tech Res* 2020;24:18574–6.
  33. Nairn S, Pinnock D. Pierre Bourdieu: Expanding the scope of nursing research and practice. *Nurs Philos* 2017;18:e12167.
  34. Mlinar Reljić N, Pajnkihar M, Fekonja Z. Self-reflection during first clinical practice: The experiences of nursing students. *Nurse Educ Today* 2019;72:61–6.
  35. Bagheri M, Taleghani F, Abazari P, Yousefy A. Triggers for reflection in undergraduate clinical nursing education: A qualitative descriptive study. *Nurse Educ Today* 2019;75:35–40.
  36. Arslantaş H. Ethic issues, codes and standards in mental health and psychiatry nursing. *J Psychiatr Nurs* 2015;6:47–56.
  37. Timmins F, King C, de Vries JM, Johnson M, Cullen JG, Haigh C. Altruism, honesty and religiosity in nursing students. *J Clin Nurs* 2018;27:3687–98.
  38. Weng HY, Fox AS, Hessenthaler HC, Stodola DE, Davidson RJ. The role of compassion in altruistic helping and punishment behavior. *PLoS One* 2015;10:e0143794.
  39. Bessen S, Jain RH, Brooks WB, Mishra M. "Sharing in hopes and worries"-a qualitative analysis of the delivery of compassionate care in palliative care and oncology at end of life. *Int J Qual Stud Health Well-being* 2019;14:1622355.
  40. Henderson A, Jones J. Developing and maintaining compassionate care in nursing. *Nurs Stand* 2017;32:60–9.
  41. Goodman B. Risk, rationality and learning for compassionate care; The link between management practices and the 'life-world' of nursing. *Nurse Educ Today* 2014;34:1265–8.
  42. Pask EG. Culture: Caring and curing in the changing health scene. In: Morgan JD, editors. *The impact of art and culture on caregiving*. Newyork: Baywood Publishing; 2019.
  43. Imran MK, Iqbal SMJ, Aslam U, Fatima T. Does social media promote knowledge exchange? A qualitative insight. *Manag Decis* 2019;57:688–702.
  44. Omolola AO. Effect of social media utilization in 21st century nursing practices in Nigeria: Analytical review. *TMR Integr Nurs* 2019;3:189–98.