

Determining nursing students' moral distress levels

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Abstract

This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to determine the level of moral distress among nursing students. The study was conducted between April 17 and April 20, 2023, with the participation of 150 students studying in the nursing department of the Faculty of Health Sciences of a university who agreed to participate in the study. Data were collected using a questionnaire designed by the researchers based on the literature and the Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students. The arithmetic mean, standard deviation, median, and frequency (in percent), t-test, ANOVA test, and Pearson correlation analysis were used to analyze the data. This study found that the intensity and frequency of moral stress among nursing students were not high. In line with the findings, it is recommended that ethics education be provided to nursing students, teaching them how to deal with unethical behavior they encounter in the clinical setting, and raising the awareness of nursing educators to support students' development.

Keywords: Distress; moral distress; morality student; nurses; nursing.

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1. Introduction

Nurses may run into ethical issues that contradict their professional and personal values during clinical practice, even though ethics is a fundamental component of nursing care [1-3]. According to Giannetta et al. [4], and Jameton [5]. Ramos et al. [6] divided the experiences that a nurse might have with ethical issues in the clinical setting into three groups: moral doubt, moral dilemmas, and moral distress. Focusing on moral distress, Jameton [5] stated that moral distress can occur when "one knows the right thing to do, but institutional constraints make it impossible to do the right thing" [4,5].

According to Lomis et al. [7], moral distress is "the negative feelings that occur when a person is unable to act in a situation in a way that he or she believes to be moral due to hierarchical or institutional constraints." Nursing students may experience a strong sense of obligation to patients since they are expected to embrace a philosophy that puts patients' sentiments first during their time at school. Nurses may feel the urge to intervene to resolve ethical-moral issues of their sense of responsibility when they come across ethical circumstances that invariably arise in clinical settings [8,9].

According to reports [10,11], the shortage of staff, violations of patient safety regulations, exposure to disrespect, a lack of resources, colleague behavior, and a poor management style by supervisors and superiors are the main reasons for moral distress among nurses. Various factors could contribute to moral distress among nursing students [9]. Some studies on this subject reported that inequalities in healthcare services, the student's relationship with his/her mentor [12], students' witnessing the negative attitudes and behaviors of healthcare professionals towards patients and their relatives [13,14], lack of communication between healthcare professionals and patients or their relatives, and inability to meet the final needs and wishes of patients [15] may cause moral distress in nursing students. Studies in the literature, including some qualitative and quantitative ones [13,15] [16-19], address moral distress among nursing students.

1.1. Objective of the study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate nursing students' levels of moral distress. The following questions were answered:

- What sociodemographic and professional traits characterize nursing students?
- How much moral anguish and unethical behavior do nursing students experience?
- Do nursing students' sociodemographic and vocational traits have an impact on their degrees of moral distress?

2. Materials and Methods

This descriptive and correlational study was conducted on students studying in the Department of Nursing at the Faculty of Health Sciences of a university.

2.1. Participants

The study only included nursing students who volunteered to participate and were over the age of 18. To choose the appropriate sample size for the investigation, power analysis was used. The effect size can be classified as small if the d value is less than 0.2, moderate if it is 0.5, and strong if it is larger than 0.8 according to Cohen's estimate (d). According to Cohen [20] and Yildirim & Yildirim [21], there may be exceptional circumstances where even a d value of 0.2 can be regarded as a substantial effect. Cohen's effect size (r) was calculated using the formula below.

$$d = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{\sqrt{SD_1^2 - SD_2^2}}$$

$$r = \frac{d}{\sqrt{(D^2) + 4}}$$

Cohen's effect size in this study was determined to be $r=0.436$. Table I presents the findings of the power analysis using the effect size. The study's power analysis was conducted using the R v3.6.1 (R Core Team, Vienna, Austria) tool, and the sample size was determined to be 140 with an alpha error of 5%, beta error of 10%, and test power of 0.95 [22,23]. When the study had 150 students, the data collection process was stopped due to the potential for data loss.

TABLE I
IDEAL SAMPLE SIZES OF POWER ANALYSIS RESULTS AND THE OPTIMAL SAMPLE SIZE THAT SHOULD BE USED

| | N | Test Power |
|----------|------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 20 | 0,269441 |
| 2 | 40 | 0,486433 |
| 3 | 60 | 0,658603 |
| 4 | 80 | 0,782525 |
| 5 | 100 | 0,866077 |
| 6 | 120 | 0,919784 |
| 7 | 140 | 0,953057 |
| 8 | 160 | 0,973068 |
| 9 | 180 | 0,984813 |
| 10 | 200 | 0,991564 |

2.2. Data collection tools

150 students who were enrolled in the nursing program at a university's Faculty of Health Sciences and who volunteered to take part in the study provided the research data between April 17 and April 20, 2023. The researchers used the two-part data collection tool (introductory information form, Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students) on the students who volunteered to take part in the study.

2.3.1. Introductory information form

The introductory information form consists of a total of 10 questions, including nine closed-ended questions about the student's age, gender, class of study, etc., and one question assessing the level of unethical behavior witnessed.

2.3.2. Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students

This scale was developed by Bordignon et al. [24] to determine the moral distress levels of nursing students and adapted into Turkish by Kovancı and Atlı Özbaş [8]. The Turkish version of the scale consists of forty-one items and three sub-dimensions: "Commitment to Ethical Dimension of Nursing", "Inappropriate institutional Conditions" and "Problems Related to the Educational Process". In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.94.

2.3. Data collection

Nursing students participating in the study were informed about the study and the questionnaire form and scale were applied. Nursing students were reminded of the that that participation was voluntary, that their names wouldn't appear on the questionnaire, and that the information gathered would only be used for purposes related to the research. The duration of the data gathering was roughly 10 minutes.

2.4. Data analysis

The study's data were entered into a computer system and assessed using IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Statistics 21 program at the level of statistical significance of $p < .05$. Number and percentage, minimum-maximum, mean, and standard deviation were used to offer descriptive analysis of the data. Shapiro-Wilk test, Q-Q plot, and/or Skewness-Kurtosis values were used to examine the data's normal distribution. The data were compared using the independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance according to the sociodemographic and occupational features of the students. The association between the scale and the questionnaire questions was investigated using Pearson correlation analysis.

3. Results

Table I shows the distribution of the sociodemographic characteristics of the study's nursing participants. It was found that 61.33% of nursing students were female, 38.67% were male, 36% were 4th-year students, 66.67% had an income equal to their expenses, 54% had an academic score average of 79 and below, 60.21% liked their profession, 62.83% wanted to be a nurse, 54.45% had not taken an ethics course, 61.26% had clinical experience, and 70% of them practiced mostly in internal services. The students' average age was 21.60 ± 1.63 years (Table II). The level of witnessing unethical behavior was 4.95 ± 2.07 (Table III).

TABLE II
DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NURSING STUDENTS

| Features | | n | % |
|---|--------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Age (21,60±1,63) | 19-20 | 35 | 23,3 |
| | 21-22 | 79 | 52,7 |
| | 23 and above | 36 | 24,0 |
| Gender | Female | 92 | 61,33 |
| | Male | 58 | 38,67 |
| Grade | Grade 2 | 48 | 32,0 |
| | Grade 3 | 48 | 32,0 |
| | Grade 4 | 54 | 36,0 |
| Economic situation | Income equal to expenditure | 100 | 66,67 |
| | Income higher than expenditure | 15 | 10,00 |
| | Income less than expenditure | 35 | 23,33 |
| Academic success average | 80-100 | 69 | 46,0 |
| | 79 and below | 81 | 54,0 |
| Liking for the profession | Yes | 81 | 54,00 |
| | No | 11 | 7,33 |
| | Partially | 58 | 38,67 |
| Desire to become a nurse | Yes | 88 | 58,67 |
| | No | 17 | 11,33 |
| | Partially | 45 | 30,00 |
| Taking an ethics course | Yes | 98 | 65,33 |
| | No | 52 | 34,67 |
| Unit with the most clinical practice | ICU | 18 | 12,0 |
| | Internal Services | 105 | 70,0 |

| | | | |
|-------|-------------------|-----|-------|
| | Surgical Services | 20 | 13,33 |
| | Other | 7 | 4,67 |
| Total | | 150 | 100,0 |

TABLE III
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF WITNESSING UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

| | N | Mean±SS | Med (Min-Max) |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----------|---------------|
| Witnessing unethical behavior | 150 | 4,95±2,07 | 5 (0-10) |

The total and subscale median scores of the Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students are presented in Table 4. The frequency total median score value of the Moral Distress Scale in Nursing Students was 1.16 (0-4) and the intensity total median score value was 1.16 (0-3). The frequency median scores for the sub-dimensions of commitment to the ethical dimension of nursing, inappropriate institutional and social conditions, and problems related to the educational process were 1.16 (0-4), 1.14 (0-3), 1.20 (0-6) and 1.27 (0-5), respectively, and the intensity median scores were 1.16 (0-3), 1.09 (0-3), 1.20 (0-6) and 1.23 (0-5), respectively (Table IV).

TABLE IV
MORAL DISTRESS SCALE AND SUBSCALE MEDIAN SCORES IN NURSING STUDENTS

| | Med (Min-Max) | |
|---|---------------|------------|
| | Frequency | Intensity |
| Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students | 1,16 (0-4) | 1,16 (0-3) |
| Commitment to the ethical dimension of nursing sub-dimension | 1,14 (0-3) | 1,09 (0-3) |
| Inappropriate institutional and social conditions sub-dimension | 1,20 (0-6) | 1,20 (0-6) |
| Problems related to the education process sub-dimension | 1,27 (0-5) | 1,23 (0-5) |

The comparison of the sociodemographic and occupational characteristics of the nursing students from this study with the mean total and subscale scores of the Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students was presented in Table 5. The mean total score of the Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students showed a significant difference according to the student's desire to be a nurse (frequency: $p<0.05$, $F=3.363$; intensity: $p<0.05$, $F=3.917$). The mean score of the inappropriate institutional and social conditions sub-dimension of the scale showed a significant difference according to nursing students' academic achievement average (frequency: $p<0,05$, $\chi^2=-1,987$) and whether they took an ethics course or not (intensity: $p<0,05$, $\chi^2=,203$). The mean score of the problems related to the educational process sub-dimension of the scale differed according to the nursing students' liking for the profession (frequency: $p<0,05$, $F=5,155$; intensity: $p<0,05$, $F=4,656$) and their desire to become a nurse (frequency: $p<0,001$, $F=8,112$; intensity: $p<0,001$, $F=9,741$) (Table V).

TABLE V
COMPARISON OF SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC AND OCCUPATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NURSING STUDENTS AND TOTAL AND SUBSCALE SCORES FROM THE MORAL DISTRESS SCALE FOR NURSING STUDENTS

| Features | | MDSNS total Mean ±SS | | Commitment to the ethical dimension of nursing Mean ±SS | | Inappropriate Institutional and Social Conditions Mean ±SS | | Problems related to the education process Mean ±SS | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|--|-----------|---|-----------|---|-----------|
| | | Frequency | Intensity | Frequency | Intensity | Frequency | Intensity | Frequency | Intensity |
| Age | 19-20 | 1,35±,89 | 1,35±,94 | 1,25±,85 | 1,26±,88 | 1,36±1,14 | 1,32±1,14 | 1,52±1,16 | 1,52±1,22 |
| | 21-22 | 1,34±,85 | 1,33±,87 | 1,20±,78 | 1,17±,80 | 1,49±1,10 | 1,44±1,14 | 1,56±1,17 | 1,56±1,18 |
| | 23 and above | 1,28±,77 | 1,24±,75 | 1,24±,77 | 1,17±,75 | 1,22±1,05 | 1,15±1,02 | 1,41±1,00 | 1,40±,99 |
| | p-value | p=,916 | p=,842 | p=,929 | p=,847 | p=,453 | p=,420 | p=,801 | P=,806 |
| | test value | F=,088 | F=,172 | F=,073 | F=,166 | F=,796 | F=,873 | F=,222 | F=,216 |
| Gender | Female | 1,30 | 1,26±,83 | 1,19±,78 | 1,15±,79 | 1,41±1,03 | 1,36±1,06 | 1,46±1,06 | 1,43±1,09 |
| | Male | 1,26 | 1,39±,89 | 1,26±,81 | 1,26±,82 | 1,37±1,20 | 1,32±1,19 | 1,61±1,21 | 1,64±1,21 |
| | p-value | p=,558 | p=,391 | p=,594 | p=,418 | p=,844 | p=,815 | p=,417 | p=,265 |
| | test value | χ2= -,588 | χ2= -,860 | χ2= -,534 | χ2= -,812 | χ2=,197 | χ2=,234 | χ2= -,814 | χ2= -,118 |
| Grade | Grade 2 | 1,25±,85 | 1,20±,85 | 1,12±,75 | 1,09±,77 | 1,30±1,03 | 1,18±1,02 | 1,46±1,20 | 1,42±1,19 |
| | Grade 3 | 1,47±,90 | 1,47±,93 | 1,33±,81 | 1,31±,82 | 1,53±1,27 | 1,52±1,29 | 1,75±1,24 | 1,75±1,28 |
| | Grade 4 | 1,27±,76 | 1,27±,78 | 1,21±,80 | 1,18±,81 | 1,36±,99 | 1,34±1,01 | 1,35±,92 | 1,38±,92 |
| | p-value | p=,333 | p=,275 | p=,430 | p=,418 | p=,569 | p=,322 | p=,189 | P=,216 |
| | test value | F=1,107 | F=1,303 | F=,848 | F=,877 | F=,565 | F=1,142 | F=1,683 | F=1,549 |
| Economic Situation | Income equal to expenditure | 1,27±,82 | 1,26±,87 | 1,22±,80 | 1,21±,83 | 1,36±1,05 | 1,31±1,10 | 1,35±1,01 | 1,34±1,03 |
| | Income higher than expenditure | 1,40±,69 | 1,37±,61 | 1,30±,74 | 1,24±,68 | 1,55±1,00 | 1,49±,90 | 1,56±,86 | 1,56±,82 |
| | Income less than expenditure | 1,45±,93 | 1,43±,92 | 1,18±,80 | 1,14±,78 | 1,43±1,28 | 1,38±1,24 | 1,95±1,40 | 1,96±1,41 |
| | p-value | p=,532 | p=,591 | p=,881 | p=,881 | p=,812 | p=,822 | p=,076 | p=,066 |
| | test value (F/Welch) | F=,635 | F=,527 | F=,126 | F=,127 | F=,209 | F=,197 | W: 2,777 | W= 2,924 |
| | 80-100 | 1,25±,82 | 1,24±,83 | 1,17±,80 | 1,14±,78 | 1,23±1,02 | 1,20±1,02 | 1,43±1,10 | 1,44±1,12 |
| | 79 and below | 1,41±,85 | 1,40±,89 | 1,28±,78 | 1,26±,82 | 1,59±1,16 | 1,51±1,19 | 1,61±1,15 | 1,59±1,16 |

TABLE V
COMPARISON OF SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC AND OCCUPATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NURSING STUDENTS AND TOTAL AND SUBSCALE SCORES FROM THE MORAL DISTRESS SCALE FOR NURSING STUDENTS

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Academic success average | p-value | p=,251 | p=,271 | p=,398 | p=,354 | p=,049* | p=,096 | p=,342 | p=,404 |
| | test value | F=-1,153 | $\chi^2=-1,105$ | F=-,847 | $\chi^2=-,930$ | $\chi^2=-1,987$ | $\chi^2=-1,675$ | F=-,954 | $\chi^2=-,837$ |
| Liking for the profession | Yes | 1,21±,84 | 1,19±,86 | 1,17±,82 | 1,14±,83 | 1,30±1,00 | 1,24±,98 | 1,27±1,04 | 1,26±1,05 |
| | No | 1,23±,50 | 1,36±,77 | 1,09±,50 | 1,24±,75 | 1,24±1,11 | 1,33±1,21 | 1,48±,71 | 1,58±,98 |
| | Partially | 1,51±,85 | 1,47±,85 | 1,32±,79 | 1,26±,78 | 1,56±1,22 | 1,49±1,25 | 1,87±1,21 | 1,84±1,22 |
| | p-value | p=,092 | p=,153 | p=,451 | p=,654 | p=,359 | p=,450 | p=,007* | p=,011* |
| | test value | F=2,423 | F=1,900 | F=,802 | F=,426 | F=1,031 | F=,803 | F=5,155 | F=4,656 |
| | | | | | | | Partially> yes | Partially> yes | |
| Desire to become a nurse | Yes | 1,19±,88 | 1,16±,89 | 1,16±,86 | 1,12±,85 | 1,31±1,03 | 1,25±1,04 | 1,22±1,05 | 1,19±1,04 |
| | No | 1,40±,64 | 1,40±,82 | 1,17±,52 | 1,19±,72 | 1,26±,91 | 1,16±1,07 | 1,88±1,12 | 1,87±1,27 |
| | Partially | 1,57±,76 | 1,58±,75 | 1,37±,72 | 1,34±,71 | 1,61±1,27 | 1,59±1,23 | 1,95±1,09 | 2,01±1,07 |
| | p-value | p=,037* | p=,022* | p=,307 | p=,325 | p=,290 | p=,205 | p=,000** | p=,000** |
| | test value (F/Welch) | F=3,363 | F=3,917 | W: 1,209 | F=1,134 | F=1,248 | F=1,600 | F=8,112 | F=9,741 |
| | Partially> yes | Partially> yes | | | | | Partially>Yes | Partially>Yes | |
| taking an ethics course | Yes | 1,40±,82 | 1,40±,85 | 1,31±,77 | 1,28±,78 | 1,53±1,13 | 1,50±1,15 | 1,53±1,13 | 1,57±1,11 |
| | No | 1,18±,85 | 1,15±,86 | 1,05±,81 | 1,03±,81 | 1,13±,98 | 1,04±,98 | 1,13±,98 | 1,40±1,19 |
| | p-value | p=,120 | p=,087 | p=,051 | p=,064 | p=,031* | p=,015* | p=,556 | p=,396 |
| | test value | $\chi^2=,663$ | $\chi^2=,749$ | $\chi^2=,574$ | $\chi^2=,460$ | $\chi^2=,240$ | $\chi^2=,203$ | $\chi^2=,171$ | $\chi^2=,212$ |
| Unit with the most clinical practice | ICU | 1,09±,80 | 1,14±,93 | 1,04±,70 | 1,07±,79 | 1,28±1,19 | 1,33±1,29 | 1,15±1,20 | 1,19±1,33 |
| | Internal Services | 1,31±,80 | 1,29±,82 | 1,18±,77 | 1,14±,79 | 1,38±1,06 | 1,31±1,05 | 1,54±1,08 | 1,53±1,09 |
| | Surgical Services | 1,55±,98 | 1,55±,98 | 1,54±,89 | 1,50±,85 | 1,59±1,26 | 1,60±1,33 | 1,60±1,27 | 1,62±1,28 |
| | Other | 1,59±1,00 | 1,45±,88 | 1,46±,90 | 1,40±,82 | 1,40±1,05 | 1,17±,91 | 1,89±1,22 | 1,64±1,12 |
| | p-value | p=,303 | p=,479 | p=,159 | p=,241 | p=,836 | p=,722 | p=,423 | p=,637 |
| | test value | F=1,225 | F=,831 | F=1,753 | F=1,415 | F=,285 | F=,443 | F=,941 | F=,569 |

*p<0.05, **p < 0.001

The relationship between nursing students' levels of witnessing unethical behavior and the Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students and its sub-dimensions is given in Table 6. A significant positive correlation was found between the level of witnessing unethical behavior and the Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students and its sub-dimensions ($r=,383$, $p<0.001$; $r=,356$, $p<0.001$; $r=,272$, $p<0.001$; $r=,354$, $p<0.001$) (Table VI).

TABLE VI
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR WITNESSED AMONG NURSING STUDENTS AND THE MORAL DISTRESS SCALE FOR NURSING STUDENTS AND ITS SUBDIMENSIONS (FREQUENCY)

| Scales | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students (Frequency) | - | ,933** | ,800** | ,895** | ,383** |
| 2. Adherence to the ethical dimension of nursing (frequency) | - | - | ,705** | ,696** | ,356** |
| 3. Inappropriate institutional and social conditions (frequency) | - | - | - | ,634** | ,272** |
| 4. Problems related to the education process (frequency) | - | - | - | - | ,354** |
| 5. Level of unethical behavior witnessed | - | - | - | - | - |

Pearson correlation coefficient. * $p<0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$

The relationship (Intensity) between nursing students' levels of witnessing unethical behavior and the Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students and its sub-dimensions is given in Table 7. A significant positive correlation was found between the level of unethical behavior witnessed and the Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students and its sub-dimensions ($r=,357$, $p<0.001$; $r=,337$, $p<0.001$; $r=,268$, $p<0.001$; $r=,328$, $p<0.001$) (Table VII).

TABLE VII
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR WITNESSED AMONG NURSING STUDENTS AND THE MORAL DISTRESS SCALE FOR NURSING STUDENTS AND ITS SUBDIMENSIONS (INTENSITY)

| Scales | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students (Intensity) | - | ,940** | ,811** | ,898** | ,357** |
| 2. Adherence to the ethical dimension of nursing (Intensity) | - | - | ,726** | ,714** | ,337** |
| 3. Inappropriate institutional and social conditions (Intensity) | - | - | - | ,646** | ,268** |
| 4. Problems related to the education process (Intensity) | - | - | - | - | ,328** |
| 5. Level of unethical behavior witnessed | - | - | - | - | - |

Pearson correlation coefficient. * $p<0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$

4. Discussion

The Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students yielded median total frequency scores of 1.16 (0-4) and median total intensity scores of 1.16 (0-3). Based on scale scores obtained by the nursing students, it can be argued that the level of moral distress is low. The frequency median values for the commitment to the ethical dimension of nursing, inadequate institutional and social conditions, and problems related to the educational process subdimensions of the scale were 1.16 (0-4), 1.14 (0-3), 1.20 (0-6), and 1.27 (0-5), and the median values for intensity were 1.16 (0-3), 1.09 (0-3), 1.20 (0-6), and 1.23 (0-5), respectively.

According to Bordignon et al. [16], the frequency of occurrence and intensity of moral distress varied between 1.21 and 2.55. According to Escolar-Chua's [2] study, among the items on the moral distress scale, nursing students earned the highest score of 2.82. Range and Rotherham [25] found that moral distress among nursing students was moderate. No matter their age, gender, level of job experience, or length of employment at the same hospital, Abumayyaleh et al. [26] discovered that nurses endured moral distress. According to Sala Defilippis, Prati, and Scascighini [27], nursing students are more likely than students in other departments to experience moral distress.

The Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students' total and subscale mean scores were found to significantly alter depending on the student's interest in becoming nurses, satisfaction with their career, average academic proficiency, and attendance at ethics classes. A study by Bordignon et al. [16] demonstrated that senior nursing undergraduate students had greater average levels of moral distress. According to Biçer's [28] study, nurses' levels of moral distress did not vary based on their propensity to choose the profession. According to Baghdadi et al. [29], nursing students had varied degrees of moral distress, with the severity of the distress dipping a little with each grade level. It might be claimed that the low degree of moral distress in this study may be predicted given that students who love their work and want to become nurses may have the drive and desire to deal with the moral issues they encounter.

5. Conclusion

We found that the Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students' frequency total median score value was 1.16 (0-4) and its intensity total median score was 1.16 (0-3). We also found that the Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students' median score varied depending on a few sociodemographic and professional traits of nursing students ($p < 0.05$). Based on the results, we determined that moral distress did not occur frequently or with great severity.

The Moral Distress Scale for Nursing Students and its sub-dimensions were found to differ significantly and positively from the level of unethical behavior witnessed by nursing students. According to the results, it is advised that nursing students receive ethics instruction, learn how to deal with unethical conduct they see in a clinical setting, and nurse educators are aware of ethical and moral issues.

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