





Research Article
10.34108/eujhs.1733883

Imprint:

Volume: 34(3)
Year: 2025
Page: 460-469

 Betül ÖZEN^a
 Yelda KOÇAK^{b*}
 Elif Zeynep METİN GEMİCİ^c
 & Mustafa ÖZER^d

^aAssoc. Prof., Erciyes University,
betulozen@erciyes.edu.tr

^{b*}Lec., Kahramanmaraş İstiklal
University,
yelda.kocak@istiklal.edu.tr

^cLec., Cappadocia University,
elif.metin@kapadokya.edu.tr

^dLec., Erzincan Binali Yıldırım
University,
Mustafa.oz@erzincan.edu.tr

*Corresponding Author

*: This research was presented as an abstract at the 8th International 19th National Nursing Congress held in Ankara (25-28 September 2024).

Received: 7/3/2025

Accepted: 12/8/2025

Published: 12/31/2025

Citation:

Betül ÖZEN, Yelda KOÇAK, Elif Zeynep METİN GEMİCİ, & Mustafa ÖZER, (2025). Community Care Perceptions of Public Health Nursing Graduate Program Students*. *Sağlık Bilimleri Dergisi*, 34(3), 460-469. <https://doi.org/10.34108/eujhs.1733883>

Community Care Perceptions of Public Health Nursing Graduate Program Students*

Abstract

The aim of this study was to describe the perceptions of community care of Public Health Nursing graduate students. The research was conducted as a descriptive study. It was conducted with 64 volunteers who were Public Health Nursing graduate students. Data were collected online between September and November 2023 using the Personal Information Form and the "Community Care Perception Scale for Nursing Students". Descriptive statistics were applied. Students' perception of community care is good, and the majority of them find community care interesting. The majority of students want to work in public health organizations (50%) and nursing homes (31.3%), while fewer prefer to work in rehabilitation centers (3.1%) and institutions for people with mental disabilities (4.7%). The greatest influence on their preference for community care work appears to be greater freedom of movement (46.9%). The least significant influence is the perception of a high-status job (3.1%). There is little interest in working in some areas of community care. Working in community care is not attractive in terms of career opportunities. It is important to make working in community care attractive in terms of career opportunities.

Keywords: Community care, nursing education, nursing students, public health nursing.



Halk Sağlığı Hemşireliği Lisansüstü Program Öğrencilerinin Toplum Bakımı Algıları

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Halk Sağlığı Hemşireliği lisansüstü öğrencilerinin toplum bakımına ilişkin algılarını tanımlamaktır. Araştırma tanımlayıcı tipte yapılmıştır. Halk Sağlığı Hemşireliği lisansüstü öğrencisi olan 64 gönüllü ile yürütülmüştür. Veriler Eylül-Kasım 2023 tarihleri arasında Kişisel Bilgi Formu ve "Hemşirelik Öğrencileri İçin Toplum Bakım Algısı Ölçeği" kullanılarak çevrim içi toplanmıştır. Tanımlayıcı istatistikler uygulanmıştır. Öğrencilerin toplum bakımına ilişkin algısı iyidir ve çoğunluğu toplum bakımını ilginç bulmaktadır. Öğrencilerin çoğunluğu halk sağlığı kuruluşları (%50) ve yaşlı bakım evlerinde (%31.3) çalışmak isterken, rehabilitasyon merkezleri (%3.1) ve zihinsel engellilere yönelik kurumlarda (%4.7) çalışmayı tercih edenlerin sayısı düşüktür. Toplum bakımında çalışmayı tercih etmelerinde en çok hareket özgürlüğünün (%46.9) fazla olmasının etkili olduğu görülmektedir. En az etkili olan ise yüksek statülü bir iş (%3.1) olduğu algısıdır. Toplum bakımının bazı alanlarında çalışmaya ilgi azdır. Toplum bakımında çalışmak kariyer fırsatları açısından cazip değildir. Toplum bakımında çalışmayı kariyer fırsatları açısından cazip hale getirmek önemlidir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Toplum bakımı, hemşirelik eğitimi, hemşirelik öğrencileri, halk sağlığı hemşireliği.



INTRODUCTION

Nurses play a critical role in protecting and promoting health, preventing diseases, and providing primary and community care.¹ The effective delivery of community healthcare depends on the availability of a sufficient number of well-trained and adequately supported nursing professionals, whose equitable remuneration and professional recognition should reflect the quality of the services they provide. In countries such as Finland and Canada, community health nursing represents an established and effective model that strengthens public health within the primary care sector, while in countries such as Austria and Türkiye, the organization of community health nursing continues to evolve.^{2,3} Türkiye has made significant progress in recent decades, as was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when

Screened by

 iThenticate[®]
for Authors & Researchers



Except where otherwise noted, content in this article is licensed under a Creative Commons 4.0 International license. Icons by Font Awesome.

community health nurses played a vital role in vaccination programs, family health services, and the management of infectious diseases in primary care settings. Recognizing the critical role of nursing services in healthcare delivery and their contribution to universal health coverage, the World Health Organization (WHO) Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office emphasized the need to develop and strengthen community health nursing programs.⁴

The WHO estimates that an additional nine million nurses and midwives will be needed by 2030 to achieve Sustainable Development Goal Three, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.⁵ To address this challenge, the WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery (SDNM 2021–2025) outlines strategic goals in four key policy areas: (a) adequate nurse education, ensuring that nurses are trained to meet the community's health needs; (b) employment and migration management, focusing on job creation, migration management, and retention of nurses where they are most needed; (c) leadership empowerment, strengthening nursing leadership in both practice and academia; and (d) support and recognition, ensuring that nurses are adequately supported, protected, and equipped to perform their roles effectively in a safe service delivery environment.⁶ These strategic directions serve as a global framework guiding countries to strengthen their nursing workforce, enhance health system resilience, and move closer to achieving universal health coverage.

Despite the growing need for highly educated community nurses, nursing students' preference for community care remains low. This reluctance largely arises from the perception of community care as a "low-status" field, primarily associated with elderly patients and limited professional development opportunities.⁷ Many students believe that community care offers fewer opportunities to apply technical nursing skills, discouraging them from entering this field after graduation.⁸ Such misconceptions obscure the essential contributions of community health nursing and pose challenges for the sustainability of public health systems.⁹

Community health nursing, as a cornerstone of community care, plays a vital role in health promotion, disease prevention, and ensuring equity in healthcare delivery. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of community health nursing education depends largely on interactive and diverse teaching methods.¹⁰ Strengthening practical education and collaboration between nursing schools and community practice settings is therefore essential.¹¹ Innovative educational models—such as experiential learning and flipped classrooms—have been shown to enhance students' engagement, competencies, and satisfaction in community health courses.^{12,13} However, in many countries, nursing curricula remain primarily hospital-oriented, contributing to students' uncertainty and anxiety when transitioning to community-based practice.

Negative perceptions of community nursing strongly influence career preferences, reinforcing the tendency toward hospital-based roles.¹⁴ Community nursing is often perceived as slower-paced and more suitable for mid-career transitions, while students may feel unprepared for autonomous practice in community settings, particularly in home visits.^{8,15} Structural reforms—such as redefining nursing roles, strengthening legal frameworks, and adopting community-oriented education—have been proposed to enhance community health nursing in several countries.¹⁶ However, the feasibility of these reforms varies depending on national healthcare policies and educational governance.

Understanding students' perceptions of community care at different educational levels is therefore crucial for curriculum development and workforce planning. Both hospital and community nursing are indispensable to health systems, yet factors influencing new graduates' preference for hospital settings remain dominant.^{17,18} Addressing these perceptions and redefining community care roles through education and policy reform can promote balance between the two sectors.

Although many studies have explored undergraduate nursing students' attitudes toward community care, limited evidence exists regarding how postgraduate students—who are already specialized in Public Health Nursing (PHN)—perceive community-based care.^{18,23} Understanding their perspectives provides valuable insights into how advanced education shapes professional identity and motivation in PHN. Given that the formation of Public Health Nurses' professional identities involves narrative self-identity, compulsory identity, and professional struggle, their perceptions of community care may vary.²⁴

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to understanding postgraduate students' perceptions of community care in Public Health Nursing and to inform policy development and curriculum design. With their advanced education and clinical experience, postgraduate students can offer deeper and more reflective insights into community health practice. Examining their perceptions will help clarify how professional identity in PHN evolves and how it can be supported through education and health policy. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of perceptions of community care among postgraduate students in Public Health Nursing?
2. What are the perceptions of postgraduate students in Public Health Nursing regarding community care?

The aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of postgraduate students specializing in Public Health Nursing regarding community care, with the goal of understanding how their views contribute to the advancement of public health practice, nursing education, and health policy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This research is descriptive research.

Research Sample/Study Group/Participants

The study population comprised 907 students enrolled in Public Health Nursing graduate programs across Türkiye.²⁵ The sample included volunteer participants from this population during the 2023-2024 academic year. Exclusion criteria consisted of (a) students who had graduated from Public Health Nursing programs, (b) those enrolled in other nursing graduate programs, and (c) non-volunteers. Students were included in the study after obtaining ethics committee approval (Date: 25.05.2023, Number: 44343). Ultimately, 64 participants meeting the inclusion criteria were included in the study.

Data Collection Process

This study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. The data collection process of the study was carried out between September and November 2023. Initially, the Personal Information Form and the measurement scale utilized in the study were transferred to a Google Forms format. Detailed information about the study was provided on the first page of the form. It was stated that the names of the participants would remain confidential and that the data would only be used in the research. The written consent statement "I agree to participate in this research voluntarily" was added to the page and the participants were asked to indicate their consent by selecting the "yes" option. Data were collected using the snowball sampling method. Graduate students enrolled in Public Health Nursing programs who were initially contacted were asked to disseminate the data collection form link to other Public Health Nursing graduate students within their networks. As the number of participants did not increase despite reminder notifications, the data collection process was subsequently concluded. In this study, data were gathered through the "Personal Information Form" and the "Community Care Perception Scale for Nursing Students (SCOPE)".

Personal Information Form

It consists of four questions (age, gender, which postgraduate programs, which period of postgraduate education) designed to get to know the students. The researchers created this form by reviewing the studies in literature.²⁶

Community Care Perception Scale for Nursing Students (SCOPE)

It is a scale developed by Van Iersel et al. The validity and reliability study of the Turkish form of the scale was conducted by Ozen et al.^{26,27} The Turkish adaptation of this scale is a 30-item scale (28 Likert items, six subscales and two open-ended questions). Seven of the items measure the perception of work, seven measure professional practices, four measure attractiveness, three measure the learning environment, four measure the perception of care, three measure personal satisfaction and two measure the underlying reasons for student choice. The items are scored from 1 to 10 and one option must be ticked for each item. Unchecked items are assigned six points. Items 2, 5, 7, 8 and 10 are reverse coded. The total score of the scale is calculated by summing the scores of the answers given to all items. The lowest total scale score is 28 and the highest score is 280. High scores indicate a high perception of community care. The Cronbach's α coefficient of the scale is .914 and is highly reliable.²⁶ The subscales include the following items; "Working Perception: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11; Professional Practices: 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 27; Attractiveness: 1, 2, 3, 10; Learning Environment: 13, 14, 15; Care Giving Perception: 12, 20, 22, 24; Personal Satisfaction: 25, 26, 28. The first 11 items of the scale measure students' thoughts about public health. The last two open-ended questions of the scale are 29th and 30th questions (29th question: If you had a practical internship next week, where would you prefer to do your internship? 30: Which three items from questions 17 to 28 of the scale are most important for you to make a positive choice for the internship in question?)

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22.0 was used in the analysis. The assumption of normality was assessed by examining whether the median, mode, and arithmetic mean values were approximately equal and whether the skewness and kurtosis coefficients fell within the acceptable range of +2 to -2. In descriptive analyses, measures of central tendency and dispersion, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were employed. The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the SCOPE scale was determined to be 0.921, indicating high reliability. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant in all analyses. To evaluate the statistical power of the sample, a post-hoc sensitivity analysis was performed using the G*Power 3.1 software. The analysis, conducted at $\alpha = 0.05$ and $1 - \beta = 0.80$, indicated that the minimum detectable effect size was Cohen's $g = 0.1815$. This corresponds to an approximate proportion difference of 18%. Accordingly, the study lacks sufficient power to detect small effects, and its findings should be regarded as descriptive and hypothesis-generating in nature.²⁸

RESULTS

It was seen that 54.7% of the participants were between the ages of 22-30, 85.9% were female, 64.1% had a doctorate, 35.9% had a master's degree, 68.8% were in the thesis phase, and 50% wanted to work in public health institutions. 3.1% of the participants wanted to work in rehabilitation centers, and 4.7% wanted to work in institutions for the mentally disabled.

As a result of the validity and reliability analyses, a rating was made to determine the levels of the SCOPE scale consisting of 28 items. The minimum (minimum) score obtained from the scale was 103 and the maximum (maximum) score was 280. The community care perceptions of the participants in the study are slightly above the medium level (mean+standard deviation=228.09+35.73). In order to determine the value range here, the score

obtained by subtracting the minimum value from the maximum value was divided by the Likert number (10) (280-103/10= 17.7). The result (17.7) was added to the lowest score (103) and graded according to the lowest, low, medium, high and highest score (280).

The mean community care perception score of the participants was 228.09±35.73. After grading, it was seen that this score range corresponded to a good level. No statistically significant difference was found when socio-demographic characteristics and SCOPE mean scores were compared ($p > 0.05$). In all tests, normal distribution assumptions were checked, and appropriate parametric tests were selected (Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic data and SCOPE scores.

Variables	Groups	n	%	SCOPE* Mean±SD**	p
Age groups	22-30	35	54.7	235.48± 30.79	0.106
	30-38	19	29.7	224.36± 36.52	
	38-46	10	15.6	209.09± 35.73	
Gender	Woman	55	85.9	229.50± 32.47	0.438
	Man	9	14.1	219.44± 53,31	
Programme of study	Master's Degree	23	35.9	231.65±32,34	0.555
	Doctor of Philosophy	41	64.1	226.09±37,74	
Study period	Course Period	20	31.3	226.00±24.14	0.755
	Thesis Period	44	68.8	229.04±40.13	
The desired place of internship in the future***	Rehabilitation center	2	3.1	213.00±56.56	0.637
	Mental health center	7	10.9	211.85±44.15	
	Institution for the mentally handicapped	3	4.7	238.00±11.31	
	Public health institutions	32	50	229.18±35.43	
	Elderly care home	20	31.3	231.05±34.71	
Total		64	100.0		

*SCOPE: Community Care Perception Scale for Nursing Students

**SD: Standard deviation

***Question 29 of the SCOPE scale (the first open-ended question of the scale)

Students' responses to the statement, 'In my opinion, working in public health...' (used to assess their attitudes toward public health careers) were analyzed. The mean of the items is 8.95±1.95 and is seen as good. While the majority of the students evaluated community care as interesting, important and useful respectively, the evaluation as fascinating, comfortable and enjoyable received lower scores compared to other items (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive characteristics of thoughts on working in community health.

SCOPE* Scale	Mean±SD**
Items 1-11	
Boring -interesting	9.45± 0.95
Fascinating - Stimulating	7.89± 2.81
Unpleasant - Pleasant	8.92± 2.19
Annoying - Acceptable	8.98± 2.03
Comfortable -Uncomfortable	8.12± 1.83
Outdated -Modern	8.92± 2.39
Important - Unimportant	9.32± 2.10
Good - Bad	9.25± 1.92
Useless - Useful	9.29± 2.17
Attractive - Not attractive	9.23± 1.33
Silly - Fun	9.09± 1.76
Total thoughts	8.95± 1.95

*SCOPE: Community Care Perception Scale for Nursing Students

**SD: Standard deviation

Students' motivations for participating in and preferring community care work were influenced by three key factors: (1) greater freedom of movement, (2) extensive interdisciplinary collaboration, and (3) the high potential to improve patients' health outcomes. Conversely, the least emphasized expectations for the profession's future included its status as a high-prestige job, followed by abundant promotion opportunities and individual responsibility (Table 3).

Table 3. Expectations for the future of the profession.

Items of Greatest Importance in Making a Positive Choice for Internship* (n:64)	n**	% (n:64)
There is a lot of playful communication with patients	16	25.0
There is a lot of co-operation with colleagues	14	21.9
There is a lot of co-operation with other disciplines	30	46.9
There is a great need for technical nursing skills	15	23.4

Too much freedom of movement	32	50.0
Too much diversity in care giving	20	31.3
There is a good working environment in terms of occupational health	12	18.8
Too much individual responsibility	8	12.5
High status job	2	3.1
For the patient, the possibility of health improvement is very high	27	42.2
Too much contact with family/relatives	11	17.2
Many opportunities for promotion/promotion	5	7.8

Question 30 of the *SCOPE scale (It is the second open-ended question of the scale)
 **Number of items selected

The SCOPE scale exhibited excellent internal consistency reliability ($\alpha=0.921$). Subscale reliability coefficients ranged from $\alpha=0.346$ to $\alpha=0.923$ (Table 4). While most subscales met or exceeded the acceptable threshold ($\alpha>0.70$), the* personal satisfaction *($\alpha=0.346$, 3 items) and* attractiveness *($\alpha=0.575$, 4 items) subscales fell below this criterion, likely due to their limited number of items.²⁹ The* working perception *subscale demonstrated the highest reliability ($\alpha=0.923$, 7 items).

Table 4. SCOPE subscale and total reliability scores.

SCOPE* Sub-Dimension	Article Number	Mean± SD**	Cronbach's Alpha
Working perception	7	63.00± 11.83	0.923
Professional practice	7	54.81± 11.12	0.806
Attractiveness	4	35.50± 5.21	0.575
Learning environment	3	21.70± 6.19	0.756
Care giving perception	4	31.21± 7.09	0.705
Personal satisfaction	3	21.85± 4.77	0.346
TOTAL	28	228.09± 35.73	0.921

*SCOPE: Community Care Perception Scale for Nursing Students

**SD: Standard deviation

DISCUSSION

Along with changes in the health characteristics of the population, the need for community health services has increased. However, nursing students, who will play important roles in meeting this need, have little desire to work in the field of public health and mostly prefer to work in acute care settings.³⁰ Therefore, defining nursing students' perceptions of community care is important, as it may influence their work in this field. Studies exist in the literature describing undergraduate nursing students' perceptions of community care. However, no study has examined the perceptions of community care among students who intend to specialize in public health nursing. It is particularly important to identify these students' perceptions of community care because they prefer to specialize in this field and because their knowledge, skills, and experience in this area differ from those of undergraduate students. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the perceptions, preferences, and expectations of PHN graduate students regarding community care.

PHN graduate students' perceptions of community care were found to be positive. Because no similar study exists in the literature measuring PHN graduate students' perceptions of community care, comparisons with the results of other studies are not possible. Existing studies conducted with undergraduate nursing students in the literature differ from our study in their perceptions of community care. Alharbi found that undergraduate nursing students' perceptions of community care (affective component) were moderately positive.¹⁹ The literature indicates that undergraduate nursing students' limited understanding of community nursing negatively impacts their perceptions of community care.⁹ One study in the literature noted that students' experience providing care in the community positively impacts their perceptions of the field.³¹ It is to be expected that PHN students represent a group with more education and experience in community care. Additionally, it is believed that one reason students pursue postgraduate education in PHN may be due to their existing positive perceptions and experiences with community care. Based on our study and the literature, it appears that higher education in community nursing and positive experiences in community nursing practice may play a role in positive perceptions of community care.

The study found that the majority of students rated community care work as interesting, important, and useful, while scores for "charming," "comfortable," and "enjoyable" were lower than for other items. A study with undergraduate nursing students found that students mostly rated community care as good, important, and useful, while those who rated it as "attractive," "comfortable," and "interesting" received lower scores.⁹ This study, as in our study, found that nursing students, regardless of their field of study and level of education, generally perceived community care work as important and useful, while those who perceived it as "comfortable" received lower scores than for other items. Graduate students in the Public Health Nursing program appear to perceive community care work as more interesting than undergraduate nursing students. This perception likely influences students' choices to pursue graduate education in Public Health Nursing, or the attractiveness of working in community care may have increased due to

their training or positive experiences in community care. To address this uncertainty, further investigation is needed into the factors that influence undergraduate students in the Public Health Nursing program's perception of community care work as interesting. In this way, similar factors can be created for undergraduate students, making working in community care more attractive to them.

In the research, we determined that factors such as having more freedom of movement, being able to collaborate with other disciplines, and the high probability of patients recovering are effective in students' preference for working in community care. The least expectations for the future of working in community care are that it is a high-status job, there are many opportunities for promotion, and there is a lot of individual responsibility. Van Iersel et al. found that undergraduate nursing students perceived community care as a low-status field with little diversity in caregiving and few opportunities for career advancement.⁹ In another study, it was found that the majority of undergraduate nursing students preferred to do internship in general hospitals (clinics such as internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, etc.) and that the high need for technical nursing skills, the presence of pleasant relationships with patients, opportunities for advancement and cooperation with colleagues were effective in these preferences.¹⁹ Peters et al. reported that students thought that working in community care allowed more autonomy, establishing a close relationship with patients, and providing holistic care to patients.³² These different perceptions and preferences towards community care may be due to the fact that students' experiences towards community care also differ, as positive, negative, or neutral. In terms of career opportunities, both groups perceived working in community care as less attractive. It is noteworthy that PHN graduate students also have this perception. In terms of Türkiye, it is thought that the lack of clear criteria on how nurses who will work in community care areas will be employed or inadequate working conditions may have an effect on the emergence of this finding.

The study found that graduate students in Public Health Nursing mostly preferred to work in public health institutions (family health centers, community health centers, etc.) and nursing homes for the elderly. General hospitals (internal medicine, surgical, child health, etc. clinics) were not preferred. Studies in the literature indicate that undergraduate nursing students mostly preferred general hospitals for their internships and rarely preferred to work in nursing homes for the elderly.^{9,19} Shen and Xiao similarly found that undergraduate nursing students were least likely to prefer working with elderly individuals, and they stated that this was due to prejudices.³³ In a study conducted in Türkiye, Okuyan et al. found that the percentage of undergraduate nursing students who stated that they wanted to work in the field of geriatrics was higher among senior nursing students.³⁴ They attributed this to senior nursing students having more clinical practice experience and receiving training on elderly-related issues within the PHN course. Because our study sample consisted of students pursuing graduate studies in Public Health Nursing, it was expected that the students in our study would want to work in public health institutions (family health centers, community health centers, etc.) and nursing homes. This result is believed to be due to the greater emphasis on elder care-related topics in Public Health Nursing graduate programs and the greater opportunities students have to gain experience working in public health institutions and nursing homes. Students may have made this choice because they have greater knowledge and positive experience in this field. Based on these results, it is important to have a high level of awareness of the field when choosing to work in that field.

Another finding regarding Public Health Nursing students' internship placement preferences is that fewer students choose to work in rehabilitation centers and institutions for the mentally ill. Since these institutions are important work areas for Public Health Nurses, it's worth discussing why they are less preferred by students.

Studies in the literature indicate that undergraduate nursing students do not view working in community care as attractive in terms of career opportunities and prefer to work mostly in hospitals. The findings from our study, however, indicate that even if specialization in Public Health Nursing is preferred, the desire to work in some community care areas remains limited. Therefore, the findings from our study provide significant evidence that initiatives should be undertaken to make working in certain community care areas, particularly in terms of career opportunities, more attractive.

This study was conducted to define the perceptions, preferences, and expectations of graduate students of PHN towards community care. We determined that the perceptions of PHN graduate students towards community care were at a good level. This may be an expected situation in terms of the fact that PHN students constitute a group with more education and experience in community care. In addition, it is thought that one of the reasons why students are oriented towards postgraduate education in the field of PHN may be due to the fact that they already have a positive perception and experience towards community care. Since there is no similar study measuring the perceptions of PHN postgraduate students towards community care in literature, comparison with the results of other studies cannot be made. In the existing studies in the literature conducted with the participation of undergraduate nursing students, the perception of community care differs from the results of our study. Alharbifound that nursing undergraduate students' perceptions of community care (emotional component) were moderately positive.¹⁹ In the literature, it was stated that the limited ideas of undergraduate nursing students about community nursing negatively affected their perceptions of community care.⁹ In a study in the literature, it is stated that students' having experiences in providing care in the community have a positive effect on their perceptions of the field.³⁰ According to our study and literature, it can be considered that higher education in community nursing and positive experiences in community nursing practices play a role in positive perceptions of community care.

In the study, we found that the majority of students rated working in community care as interesting, important, and useful, while ratings for fascinating, comfortable, and enjoyable were lower than for other items. In a study conducted with undergraduate nursing students, it was found that students mostly evaluated community care as good,

important, and useful, while evaluating it as attractive, comfortable, and interesting remained at lower scores.⁹ In this study, as in our study, it is seen that nursing students, regardless of the field and level of education they study, mostly perceive working in community care as important and useful; and perception as comfortable is seen to have lower scores than other items. It is seen that graduate students of PHN perceive working in community care as more interesting than undergraduate nursing students. This perception probably has an effect on the students' preference for postgraduate education in the field of Public Health Nursing, or the attractiveness of working in community care may have increased depending on their education or positive experiences in community care. In order to resolve this uncertainty, the factors that enable graduate students of PHN to perceive working in community care as interesting should be examined in more detail. In this way, working in community care can be made more attractive for students by enabling the creation of similar factors for undergraduate students.

In the research, we determined that factors such as having more freedom of movement, being able to collaborate with other disciplines, and the high probability of patients recovering are effective in students' preference for working in community care. The least expectations for the future of working in community care are that it is a high-status job, there are many opportunities for promotion, and there is a lot of individual responsibility. Van Iersel et al. found that undergraduate nursing students perceived community care as a low-status field with little diversity in caregiving and few opportunities for career advancement.⁹ In another study, it was found that the majority of undergraduate nursing students preferred to do internship in general hospitals (clinics such as internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, etc.) and that the high need for technical nursing skills, the presence of pleasant relationships with patients, opportunities for advancement and cooperation with colleagues were effective in these preferences.¹⁹ Peters et al.³⁰ reported that students thought that working in community care allowed more autonomy, establishing a close relationship with patients, and providing holistic care to patients. These different perceptions and preferences towards community care may be due to the fact that students' experiences towards community care also differ, as positive, negative, or neutral. In terms of career opportunities, both groups perceived working in community care as less attractive. It is noteworthy that PHN graduate students also have this perception. In terms of Türkiye, it is thought that the lack of clear criteria on how nurses who will work in community care areas will be employed or inadequate working conditions may have an effect on the emergence of this finding.

In the study, we found that PHN graduate students mostly want to work in public health institutions (family health centers, community health centers, etc.) and elderly care homes. General hospitals (internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, etc., clinics) are not preferred. In the studies in the literature, it is seen that nursing undergraduate students mostly prefer general hospitals for internship and rarely prefer to work in elderly care homes.^{9,19} This is an expected result since the sample of our study consists of students continuing their postgraduate education in Public Health Nursing. It is thought that the fact that the topics related to elderly care are addressed more intensively in PHN postgraduate programs, and that students have more opportunities to experience working in public health institutions and elderly care homes, causes this result to emerge. Students may have made this choice because they have more knowledge and positive experiences in this field. Okuyan et al. reached a similar conclusion in a study conducted in Türkiye.³⁴ In the study, they found that the rate of nursing undergraduate students who stated that they wanted to work in the field of geriatrics was higher among senior nursing undergraduate students. They attributed this situation to the fact that senior students had more clinical practice experience and received training on advanced age-related issues within the scope of the PHN course. Shen and Xiao found that undergraduate nursing students least preferred to work with elderly people due to their prejudices.³³ Based on these results, it is important to have a high awareness of that field in making a preference for working in a field. Another finding regarding the choice of the place where the students want to do an internship is that the number of those who prefer to work in rehabilitation centers and institutions for the mentally disabled is low. Since these institutions are important working areas of Public Health Nurses, it is a finding that needs to be discussed why they are less preferred by students. These findings from our research are important evidence that initiatives need to be taken to make working in community care attractive in terms of career opportunities.

Considering the limitations of the study, it was initially anticipated that online data collection would facilitate access to Public Health Nursing (PHN) graduate students across Türkiye; however, the number of volunteers was lower than expected. The study population consisted of 907 individuals, and the aim was to reach at least 10% of this population, but only 7.1% (n=64) could be reached. According to the post-hoc sensitivity analysis, the study had insufficient power for small effects, but the results were descriptive and hypothesis-generating. During the data collection process, announcements were shared via various social media platforms (such as WhatsApp groups, Facebook, and university web pages) to contact PHN graduate students from universities throughout Türkiye.

Due to the limited accessibility to the entire population, the snowball sampling method was adopted. This approach, while useful for reaching a scattered population, may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, the results reflect only the perceptions of the 64 volunteer participants who took part in the study. These limitations arise from the voluntary nature of participation and the difficulty of directly accessing all individuals in the target population.

CONCLUSION

This study describes the perceptions, preferences, and expectations of PHN graduate students towards community care. PHN graduate students' perceptions of community care are positive. Students perceive working in community care as interesting, important, and useful. Freedom of movement, collaboration with other disciplines, and a high

likelihood of patient recovery are the main reasons why students prefer to work in community care, while career opportunities are less important. In order to promote community care, it is crucial to make career opportunities in this field attractive. The reasons why less preferred fields of study (e.g., rehabilitation centers, institutions for the mentally disabled) are not preferred should be identified, and appropriate initiatives should be taken to address these reasons. There is a need for studies to raise awareness of community care. Nursing curricula should be designed to positively affect students' perceptions of community care. Placement of students in practice areas should be planned in such a way that they can experience care in the hospital environment and community care in a balanced way. The current legislation on the employment of nurses should be organized to encourage nurses to work and stay in community care. Studies with larger samples examining the perception of community care among PHN graduate students in countries with different socio-cultural characteristics are recommended.



DECLARATIONS

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval was received for this study from the Non-Interventional Clinical Ethics Committee of Cappadocia University (Date: 25.05.2023, Number: 44343).

Informed Consent: Written consent was obtained from students participating in the study.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Author Contributions: Concept-BÖ; Design-BÖ, YK, EZMG; Supervision-BÖ; Resources-BÖ, YK, EZMG, MÖ; Materials-BÖ, YK, EZMG, MÖ; Data Collection and/or Processing-MÖ, YK; Analysis and/or Interpretation-MÖ; Literature Search-BÖ, YK, EZMG, MÖ; Writing Manuscript-BÖ, YK, EZMG, MÖ; Critical Review-BÖ, YK, EZMG, MÖ.

Declaration of Interests: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Funding: None.

BEYANLAR

Etik Komite Onayı: Bu çalışma için Kapadokya Üniversitesi Girişimsel Olmayan Klinik Etik Kurulu'ndan etik kurul onayı alınmıştır (Tarih: 25.05.2023, Sayı: 44343).

Bilgilendirilmiş Onam: Çalışmaya katılan öğrencilerden yazılı onam alınmıştır.

Hakem Değerlendirmesi: Dış bağımsız.

Yazar Katkıları: Fikir- BÖ; Tasarım-BÖ, YK, EZMG; Denetleme- BÖ; Kaynaklar- BÖ, YK, EZMG, MÖ; Malzemeler- BÖ, YK, EZMG, MÖ; Veri Toplanması ve/veya işlenmesi-MÖ, YK; Analiz ve/veya yorum-MÖ; Literatür taraması- BÖ, YK, EZMG, MÖ; Yazıyı yazan- BÖ, YK, EZMG, MÖ; Eleştirel inceleme- BÖ, YK, EZMG, MÖ.

Çıkar Çatışması: Yazarlar arasında herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

Finansal Destek: Yok.

Sustainable Development Goals:



REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization. Nursing and midwifery. <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/nursing-and-midwifery>. Published 2024. Accessed June 2, 2025.
2. Horak M, Haubitzer S. *Community Health Nurse: Handlungsfelder in der Pflege im Kontext von Public Health*. Vienna: Facultas; 2021:135-168.
3. Lidauer H, Stummer H. Community health nursing education in Austria: The need for competences in planning, management and collaboration. *Healthcare*. 2023;11(24):3169. doi:10.3390/healthcare11243169.
4. World Health Organization. Report of the 66th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean. <https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/EMRC6616E-eng.pdf>. Published 2019. Accessed June 2, 2025.
5. World Health Organization. State of the World's Nursing 2020: Investing in Education, Jobs and Leadership. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003279>. Published 2020. Accessed June 2, 2025.

6. World Health Organization. The WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery (2021–2025). <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240033863>. Published 2021. Accessed June 2, 2025.
7. Chamanga E, Dyson J, Loke J, McKeown E. Factors influencing the recruitment and retention of registered nurses in adult community nursing services: An integrative literature review. *Prim Health Care Res Dev*. 2020;221: e1. doi:10.1017/S1463423620000353.
8. Ng PY, Lau ST, Ong SF, Liaw SY. Singaporean nursing students' perceptions of a career in community nursing. *Int Nurs Rev*. 2019;66(4):514-522. doi:10.1111/inr.12528
9. Van Iersel M, Latour CH, De Vos R, Kirschner PA, op Reimer WJS. Perceptions of community care and placement preferences in first-year nursing students: A multicentre, cross-sectional study. *Nurse Educ Today*. 2018; 60:9297. doi: 10.1016/j.nedt.2017.09.016.
10. Ildarabadi E, Karimi-Moonaghi H, Heydari A, et al. Teaching methods in community health nursing clerkships: Experiences of healthcare staff in Iran. *J Educ Eval Health Prof*. 2014; 11:25. doi:10.3352/jeehp.2014.11.25.
11. Fukuyama Y, Ishibashi A, Shinchi K, Akiyama A. Factors affecting the future employment of new graduate nurses as home-visiting nurses: A cross-sectional study in Japan. *J Rural Med*. 2022;17(1):50-56. doi:10.2185/jrm.2021-031.
12. Choshi M. Addressing challenges in undergraduate community health nursing clinical: Kolb's experiential learning theory. *J Nurs Educ*. 2025;64(6):e31-e34. doi:10.3928/01484834-20240513-02.
13. Chang TH, Hsu YC. Learning outcomes of flipped classroom on community health nursing course. *J Community Health Nurs*. 2024;41(4):265-272. doi:10.1080/07370016.2024.2389964.
14. Calma KRB, Halcomb E, Stephens M. The impact of curriculum on nursing students' attitudes, perceptions and preparedness to work in primary health care: An integrative review. *Nurse Educ Pract*. 2019;39:1-10. doi:10.1016/j.nepr.2019.07.006.
15. Rusli KDB, Tan AJQ, Ong SF, Speed S, Lau Y, Liaw SY. Home-based nursing care competencies: A scoping review. *J Clin Nurs*. 2023;32(9-10):1723-1737. doi:10.1111/jocn.16169.
16. Hosseinejad A, Rassouli M, Jahani S, Elahi N, Molavynejad S. Community health nursing in Iran: A review of challenges and solutions (an integrative review). *Front Public Health*. 2022; 10:899211. doi:10.3389/fpubh.2022.899211.
17. Kako M, Halcomb E, Mizukawa M, Moriayama M. How is primary care nursing embedded in nursing undergraduate curricula: A mixed-method study from four countries. *J Gen Fam Med*. 2024; 25(6):309-316. doi:10.1002/jgf2.711.
18. Sela-Vilensky Y, Grinberg K, Nissanholtz-Gannot R. Attracting Israeli nursing students to community nursing. *Isr J Health Policy Res*. 2020; 9:44. doi:10.1186/s13584-020-00400-6.
19. Alharbi TAF. Nursing students' perceptions on community care and placement preference in Saudi Arabian universities: A multicenter cross-sectional study. *Nurse Educ Today*. 2023; 130:105939. doi: 10.1016/j.nedt.2023.105939.
20. Hsu MHK, Ye QH, Ling MH. Career preferences among nursing students: A cross-sectional study. *SAGE Open Nurs*. 2022; 8:23779608221094538. doi:10.1177/23779608221094538.
21. Snyder BL, Doran K, Doede M. Nursing students' perceptions of a community health street outreach experience: Thematic analysis. *J Nurs Educ*. 2022;61(7):394-397. doi:10.3928/01484834-20220613-03.
22. Chee JMP, Rusli KDB, Tan ZYA, et al. Perceptions of community care among nursing students: A cross-sectional study with implications to nursing workforce. *Nurse Educ Today*. 2024; 137:106162. doi: 10.1016/j.nedt.2024.106162.
23. Hsu MHK, Ling MH. Nursing students' attitudes towards older people and career preferences in Macao: A pilot study. *J Nurs Educ Pract*. 2019;9(2):10-19. doi:10.5430/jnep.v9n2p10.
24. Drevdahl DJ, Canales MK. Being a real nurse: A secondary qualitative analysis of how public health nurses rework their work identities. *Nurs Inq*. 2020;27(4): e12360. doi:10.1111/nin.12360.
25. Council of Higher Education. Number of students by education levels and units. Higher Education Information Management System. <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>. Published 2023. Accessed June 2, 2025.
26. Ozen B, Demir G, Sevig U. The scale on community care perception (SCOPE) for nursing students: reliability and validity. *Nurs Forum*. 2022; 57:1096-1103. doi:10.1111/nuf.12794.
27. Van Iersel M, De Vos R, Latour C, Kirschner PA, op Reimer WS. The scale on community care perceptions (SCOPE) for nursing students: A development and psychometric validation study. *Nurse Educ Pract*. 2018; 31:61-67. doi: 10.1016/j.nepr.2018.05.002.
28. Faul F, Erdfelder E, Buchner A, Lang AG. Statistical power analyses using G* Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behav Res Methods*. 2009;41(4): 1149-1160. doi:10.3758/BRM.41.4.1149.
29. Pallant J. Preliminary Analyses. In: Balci S, Ahi B, eds. *SPSS Survival Manual: A Step-by-Step Guide to Data Analysis Using IBM SPSS*. Ankara: Anı Publishing; 2017:113-118.
30. Van Iersel M, Latour CH, De Vos R, Kirschner PA, op Reimer WJS. Nursing students' perceptions of community care and other areas of nursing practice—A review of the literature. *Int J Nurs Stud*. 2016; 61:1-19. doi: 10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2016.05.011.
31. Van Iersel M, De Vos R, van Rijn M, et al. Influencing nursing students' perceptions of community care with curriculum-redesign: A quasi-experimental cohort study. *BMC Med Educ*. 2019;19(1):299. doi:10.1186/s12909-019-1733-5.

32. Peters K, McInnes S, Halcomb E. Nursing students' experiences of clinical placement in community settings: A qualitative study. *Collegian*. 2015;22(2):175-181. doi: 10.1016/j.colegn.2015.03.001.
33. Shen J, Xiao LD. Factors affecting nursing students' intention to work with older people in China. *Nurse Educ Today*. 2012;32(3):219-223. doi: 10.1016/j.nedt.2011.03.016.
34. Okuyan CB, Bilgili N, Mutlu A. Factors affecting nursing students' intention to work as a geriatric nurse with older adults in Türkiye: a cross-sectional study. *Nurse Educ Today*. 2020; 95:104563. doi: 10.1016/j.nedt.2020.104563.

