

# A review of nursing departments in higher education institutions in Türkiye

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## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** The presence of qualified nurses is an indispensable element for the health system. The training of qualified nurses depends on nursing education and the provision of this education by specialized nurses. This study aims to examine the nursing departments in higher education institutions in Türkiye in terms of some variables.

**Methods:** The data of this descriptive study were collected between March 20 and 31, 2024 by using the “<https://yokatlas.yok.gov.tr>” and “<https://akademik.yok.gov.tr>” and the official websites of 158 universities.

**Results:** It was observed that the majority of higher education institutions providing nursing education were located within the faculty of health sciences (82.3%), were state universities (65.9%), and were located in the Marmara Region (31.6%). It was determined that 3641 academicians worked in a total of 158 universities across Türkiye, while the most academicians were in the “internal medicine nursing” department, the least academicians were in the “nursing education” department, and 5.5% of the academicians were from outside the field of nursing.

**Conclusion:** It was observed that there are widespread departments providing nursing education in universities throughout Turkey, although state universities are predominant, foundation universities also prioritize nursing departments and out-of-field academicians are involved in nursing education.

**Keywords:** Nurse, nursing education, academician, department

## INTRODUCTION

The nursing profession emerged with the identity of a healer woman shaped by women’s social roles and models, and Florence Nightingale laid the foundations of the professional nursing profession in the Crimean War (Kıran & Taşkiran, 2015). The first modern nursing education was opened by Florence Nightingale in 1860 at St. Thomas in England. Nursing students were accepted to this school according to various criteria and received their education by nurses. Dr. Besim Ömer Akalın, who was influenced by Florence Nightingale, laid the foundation of modern nursing in Türkiye and opened the voluntary patient care course in 1911 (Çamlıca & Kartal, 2021; Kalanlar & Kublay, 2010; Ay, 2012). Nurses who received certificates from these courses took part in the care of wounded soldiers during the war. During the Republican period, the Red Crescent Nursing School established in İstanbul in 1925 was the first known nursing school. Later, in 1946, vocational high schools of health, which provided three-year education under the Ministry of Health, continued to provide education (Kalanlar & Kublay, 2010). The most important step taken after schooling for the professionalization of the profession was the enactment of

the nursing law in 1954 (Official Gazette, 1954). Following this law, the Aegean School of Nursing was opened in 1955 as the first school in Türkiye to offer undergraduate nursing education (Bırol, 2009; Ay, 2012). Gevher Nesibe Health Education Institute was established in 1961 in order for nurses to continue their higher education, and as a result of the quality and quantity of the profession developing over time, the first nursing master’s program was opened in 1968 and the first doctoral education program was opened in 1972 at Hacettepe University (Bırol, 2009; Ay, 2012).

The nursing profession, which has developed over time, has turned into a professional profession that is responsible for bringing the healthy individual to an optimal state of well-being, providing care and treatment to the sick individual, meeting the physical, mental and social needs of the individual, society and family, and has its own scientific infrastructure (Bırol, 2009). The most important steps affecting the professionalization process are legal regulations and developments in nursing education. In the call made by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2016, it was emphasized that the quality of nursing education should

be improved in order to increase the quality of the nursing profession (WHO, 2016). In our country, while the education level of the nursing profession was at the “high school” level in the past years, based on the nursing law enacted in 2007, the condition of being a “bachelor’s degree graduate” was sought in order to practice the nursing profession (Nursing Law, 2007). In Canada, nursing education standards were established and it was emphasized that nursing education should be provided by nurse educators (Baker, Cary, & da Conceicao Bento, 2021). According to WHO, theoretical and practical courses within the scope of basic nursing education should be carried out by nurses specialized in this field. Nurse educators should be equipped with the skills to conduct research-based education, develop learning and change theoretical/practical strategies instead of theoretical/practical strategies, and have the diploma degree required to be an educator at the university (WHO, 2000).

The basic need of the health care system is qualified nurses and optimal nursing care. The training of competent and professional nurses to meet this need depends on the student’s strategic thinking and clinical experience during the nursing education process (Yürümezoğlu & Kocaman, 2024). This process reveals the importance of nursing education. Effective and accurate delivery of applied courses in nursing education is of universal importance. This education should be provided to students by nurse educators who are experts in their field. It is known that the number of nurse-based experts in nursing undergraduate programs in our country and in the world is insufficient (Boamah, Callen & Cruz, 2021). One of the reasons for this problem in our country is that nursing undergraduate programs are opened in large numbers by focusing on quantitative competencies. These reasons result in the inclusion of academicians outside the field in nursing undergraduate programs. Thus, nursing education is deeply affected and risks that may deeply affect public health arise with the qualitative loss of nurses trained in basic education. With this study, variables such as the distribution of academic staff for nursing departments in higher education institutions will be examined to understand the current situation and to obtain information that will shed light on the planning of nursing education.

## METHODS

### Ethical Approval

Since secondary data were used in this study, ethical approval permission was not required. The rules of research and publication ethics were followed in this article.

### Purpose of the Study

This descriptive study aimed to examine the nursing departments registered with the Council of Higher Education in Türkiye according to the number of academicians, titles, departments, university types and regions. In this direction, answers to the following questions were sought.

- How is the distribution of nursing programs according to university type?
- How is the distribution of academicians in nursing programs according to their departments?
- How is the distribution of academicians in the nursing department according to titles?

- What is the geographical distribution of the nursing undergraduate program?
- What are the specializations of non-field academicians in the nursing department?

Sample The population of the study was the nursing departments in Türkiye and Cyprus affiliated to Council of Higher Education (CHE), and no sample selection was made from the population, and the entire population was reached.

### Data Collection Process

The data of the study were collected between March 20 and 31, 2024 by using the databases of the CHE and the official websites of 158 universities. The following databases, which are open to access over the internet, were used to reach the total number of academicians in the nursing department, to evaluate their distribution in nine main science branches, to evaluate the distribution of academic titles, and to evaluate the ratio in seven geographical regions.

- Higher education program atlas (<https://yokatlas.yok.gov.tr>)
- Council of higher education academic search (<https://akademik.yok.gov.tr>)

### Statistical Analysis

The data collected in the study were compiled through Microsoft Excel program and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

## RESULTS

In this study, which was conducted to examine the institutions providing nursing education in Türkiye and the academic staff working in these institutions, it was determined that 158 universities provide education in nursing departments.

When the schools with nursing departments were examined, it was found that there were more nursing departments in public universities (65.9%) than in foundation universities (34.1%), and these departments were mostly located within the faculty of health sciences. The lowest number of nursing departments was found in the school of health (5%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of schools with nursing departments

University type	Faculty of health sciences/ nursing n (%)	Faculty of nursing/ nursing n (%)	School of health/nursing n (%)	Total n (%)
State	88 (55.7)	15 (9.6)	1 (0.6)	104 (65.9)
Foundation	42 (26.6)	5 (3.1)	7 (4.4)	54 (34.1)
Total	130 (82.3)	20 (12.7)	8 (5)	158 (100)

\*Although Cyprus is not among the regions in Türkiye, since the universities in this country are registered with CHE, they are shown in a separate section and in this table.

The distribution of universities with nursing departments by region is given in Table 2. In terms of the total number of universities, the Marmara Region (31.6%) ranks first and the Central Anatolia Region (17%) ranks second. According to the number of public universities, the Marmara Region ranks first again, but it is noteworthy that there are almost twice as many foundation universities in this region. There are no foundation universities in the Eastern Anatolia Region, while there are no nursing departments in any state university in Cyprus.

**Table 2. Distribution of universities with nursing departments by region**

Regions	University type	n (%)	Total n (%)
Marmara Region	State	17 (10.8)	50 (31.6)
	Foundation	33 (20.8)	
Central Anatolia Region	State	18 (11.7)	27 (17.0)
	Foundation	9 (5.6)	
Egean Region	State	12 (7.6)	14 (8.8)
	Foundation	2 (1.2)	
Mediterranean Region	State	11 (7.0)	13 (8.2)
	Foundation	2 (1.2)	
Black Sea Region	State	18 (11.4)	19 (12.0)
	Foundation	1(0.6)	
Southeastern Anatolia Region	State	10 (6.3)	12 (7.5)
	Foundation	2 (1.2)	
Eastern Anatolia Region	State	16 (10.1)	16 (10.1)
	Foundation	0 (0)	
Cyprus*	State	0 (0)	7 (4.4)
	Foundation	7 (4.4)	
Total		158	100

When the distribution of academic staff according to their academic titles is examined, it is seen that 28.6% of them are assistant professors, 26.9% are lecturers, 14.9% are associate professors and only 11.2% are professors. It was found that the highest number of professors were in the department of internal medicine nursing, followed by the department of women’s health and obstetrics nursing; the highest number of associate professors were in the department of public health nursing, followed by the department of psychiatric nursing; the highest number of doctoral faculty members and lecturers were in the department of internal medicine nursing, and the highest number of research assistants were in the department of surgical nursing (Table 3).

Table 3 shows the distribution of academic staff working in nursing departments according to their departments. Internal medicine nursing (15.1%), surgical nursing (14.7%) and public health nursing (13.2%) have the highest number of academic staff, while education in nursing (2%), nursing management (3.9%) and nursing principles (10.9%) have the lowest number of academic staff. It is also seen that 5.5% of the academicians working in nursing education have expertise outside their field. It is noteworthy that the employment of out-of-field academic staff is higher in foundation universities than in public universities.

The basic and specialization fields of out-of-field academic staff are given in Table 4. Although it is seen that the out-of-field lecturers are mostly from the basic field of health sciences, it was determined that academicians from the basic field of social, humanities and administrative sciences, basic field of science and mathematics and basic field of engineering are also included in the nursing departments.

**Table 4. Basic and specialization areas of non-field instructors in nursing**

Basic area	Area of specialization
Health sciences basic area	Physiology, biochemistry, midwifery, cardiology, medical histology, biology education, gastroenterology, urology, plastic surgery, health management, oncology, pharmacology, health physics, pharmacy, anatomy, nutrition and dietetics, general surgery, health informatics, medical biochemistry, basic immunology, medical history and ethics, veterinary parasitology, veterinary anatomy, veterinary microbiology, veterinary physiology
Social-humanities and administrative basic sciences	Management and organization, management and strategy, forensic social sciences
Science and mathematics basic area	Biology, molecular biology and genetics, chemistry
Engineering basic area	Food engineering

**Table 3. Distribution of faculty members in nursing departments in Türkiye according to departments and university types**

Department	University type	Teaching staff					Total n (%)
		Professor	Associate professor	Assistant professor	Teaching assistant	Research assistant	
Nursing principles	State	22	49	102	80	65	397 (10.9)
	Foundation	15	10	16	24	14	
Internal medicine nursing	State	55	62	137	110	65	553 (15.1)
	Foundation	16	5	34	51	18	
Surgical diseases nursing	State	31	58	115	109	97	537 (14.7)
	Foundation	20	8	42	45	12	
Obstetrics and gynecology nursing	State	42	62	86	65	64	399 (11.0)
	Foundation	17	4	17	29	13	
Pediatric nursing	State	47	56	106	70	80	437 (12.0)
	Foundation	8	3	27	32	8	
Psychiatric nursing	State	31	78	84	79	65	426 (11.7)
	Foundation	11	9	27	27	15	
Public health nursing	State	40	90	83	102	72	480 (13.2)
	Foundation	6	7	30	31	19	
Education in nursing	State	2	3	9	30	10	75 (2.0)
	Foundation	1	0	2	18	0	
Management in nursing	State	5	16	44	18	14	139 (3.9)
	Foundation	7	0	19	13	3	
Non-field teaching staff in nursing	State	13	13	31	24	12	198 (5.5)
	Foundation	21	11	31	22	20	
Total	n (%)	410 (11.2)	544 (14.9)	1042 (28.6)	979 (26.9)	666 (18.4)	3641 (100)

## DISCUSSION

In the examination conducted to examine the nursing departments in the universities registered to CHE according to some variables, it was seen that there are nursing departments in 158 universities and education is provided with 3641 academic staff. In a study conducted by Yürümezoğlu and Kocaman (2024), when the number of academicians by years was examined, it was found that the total number of academicians was 226 in 1996-1997 academic year, 861 in 2000-2001, 1073 in 2007-2008, 1245 in 2011-2012 academic year, 1894 in 2015-2016, and 2787 in 2022-2023. In our study, it was determined that there were 3641 academic staff in the 2023-2024 academic year. It was found that the total number of academics increased substantially in the last 28 years, and this increase was 30.6% in the last one year. In the same study conducted by Yürümezoğlu and Kocaman (2024), the number of universities was also given. Looking at the total number of universities by years, there were 80 universities in 1996-2000, 92 in 2000-2001, 101 in 2010-2011, 124 in 2014-2015, and 133 in 2015-2016. In 2022-2023, 99 state and 54 foundation universities provide education. In our study, in 2023-2024, there are 104 state and 54 foundation universities, totaling 158 universities providing nursing education. While there has been no increase in foundation universities in the last year, there has been a 5.1% increase in state universities. It can be thought that this situation is primarily related to the objectives of the CHE in establishing universities, and that the establishment of a university in a province contributes to the development of that city is more important than the adequacy of infrastructure. In addition, the fact that nurses have the opportunity to find a job quickly and have the opportunity to be appointed to the state has caused nursing departments to be preferred by students, which has led to occupancy rates above 100%. It can be said that increasing student demand and educational needs have naturally led to an increase in both the number of universities and the number of academicians.

When the schools with nursing departments were examined in the study, it was found that there were more nursing departments in state universities than in foundation universities, and that these departments were mostly located within the Faculty of Health Sciences. It can be thought that the fact that the majority of nursing departments do not meet the necessary criteria to become a faculty due to reasons such as not having sufficient infrastructure and teaching staff may be the reason for this situation. In our country, university education is commonly provided by state universities (CHE, 2024), similarly, it is an expected result that nursing education is provided by state universities. In our study, when the distribution of universities according to regions was analyzed, the Marmara Region ranked first and the Central Anatolia Region ranked second. Although Marmara University ranks first in terms of the number of public universities, it is noteworthy that almost twice as many foundation universities are located in this region. While there are no foundation universities in the Eastern Anatolia Region, it was determined that there is no nursing department in any state university in Cyprus. Similarly, in the study of Yürümezoğlu and Kocaman (2024), it was observed that the Marmara and Central Anatolia Regions had the highest number of universities, whereas in our study, there was a decrease in the number of foundation universities

in Cyprus. It can be said that this situation is related to the increasing number of public universities. The establishment of universities is influenced by the dynamics of the province where they are established and is preferred according to the potential of the city. In terms of population, the Marmara and Central Anatolia Regions are home to 26,412,501 and 13,689,883 people, respectively, and contain large cities such as İstanbul and Ankara (TSI, 2023). Therefore, almost half of both public and foundation universities are located in these two regions. In addition to the infrastructure required for nursing education, the opportunities offered by the city to students and academics working in these universities cause these universities to be preferred. The lowest number of universities in Cyprus can be said to be related to the fact that all of the universities there are foundation universities and students pay a fee for their education.

When the distribution of the academic staff according to their academic titles is examined, it is seen that the majority of them are “doctoral faculty members”. It was found that the highest number of professors were in the department of internal medicine nursing; the highest number of associate professors were in public health nursing; the highest number of doctoral lecturers and lecturers were in the department of internal medicine nursing, and the highest number of research assistants were in the department of surgical nursing. The higher number of professors, doctoral faculty members and lecturers in the department of internal diseases compared to other departments may be thought to be due to the fact that internal diseases constitute the basis of nine departments and that there are more higher education programs in this field. In the study, when the distribution of academic staff working in nursing departments according to departments was examined, it was seen that there were the highest number of academic staff in internal medicine nursing and the lowest number of academic staff in the department of education in nursing. When the reason for the low specialization in the field of education in nursing is evaluated, the priority areas determined by CHE include surgical nursing, child health and diseases nursing, gynecology and obstetrics nursing, psychiatric nursing, Internal diseases nursing and nursing principles (CHE, 2024). The lack of education in nursing and nursing management among these majors may be a reason for the low number of academicians in these fields. Another factor may be that postgraduate programs for education in nursing and nursing management are not common.

Another finding of the study is the employment of instructors outside the field of nursing. One of the main reasons for the employment of instructors outside the field may be the disproportion between the number of trained instructors of nursing origin and the number of nursing undergraduate programs, and the lack of sufficient academicians of nursing origin. The fact that CHE (2024) leaves the staffing criteria to the relevant university in the staff appointments of universities may also be effective in the formation of out-of-field employment. Although it is seen that this employment is mostly in foundation universities and frequently from the health sciences basic field, it can be said that the fact that academics from the engineering basic field are also in nursing departments is related to the fact that it is easier to employ academics in dynamic departments such as nursing. The high

number of non-field academics in foundation universities can be thought to be due to the fact that foundation universities open uncontrolled nursing departments with the aim of commercial gain and being a preferred department.

## CONCLUSION

In line with the research findings, it is seen that there are widespread departments providing nursing education in universities across Türkiye, and although state universities are predominant, foundation universities also prioritize nursing departments. It has been observed that the number of nursing departments and academicians has increased over the years, the highest number of academicians are in Internal medicine nursing, the lowest number of academicians are in nursing education departments, and out-of-field academicians are also involved in nursing education. In order to prevent out-of-field employment in nursing education and to train sufficient academicians for the departments, it is recommended that nursing graduate programs become widespread and advanced studies should be carried out in this field.

## ETHICAL DECLARATIONS

### Ethics Committee Approval

Since secondary data were used in this study, ethical approval permission was not required. The rules of research and publication ethics were followed in this article.

### Informed Consent

Since secondary data were used in this study, informed consent not need.

### Referee Evaluation Process

Externally peer-reviewed.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

### Financial Disclosure

The authors declared that this study has received no financial support.

### Author Contributions

All of the authors declare that they have all participated in the design, execution, and analysis of the paper, and that they have approved the final version.

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