



Hemşirelik öğrencilerinin hemşirelik bakımına ilişkin metaforik algıları: Fenomenolojik bir çalışma

Metaphorical perceptions of nursing students about nursing care: A phenomenological study

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ABSTRACT

Aim:This study aims to analyze metaphorical perceptions of nursing students about the concept of care. **Materials and Methods:** The study had a phenomenological research design. The study was conducted at the Gulhane Faculty of Nursing in University of Health Sciences between May 2021 and January 2022. Undergraduate nursing students, who enrolled to nursing faculty of a university during the fall semester of 2021-2022 academic year, constituted the population of the study. Qualitative data were collected with 78 students selected from all classes. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form that included questions on sociodemographic characteristics and statements with blanks about the concept of care. **Results:** Being allowed to create multiple metaphors, the participants expressed 51 metaphors. These metaphors are based on five themes: commitment to professional values and ethical principles of nursing, evaluating and meeting patient needs from a holistic perspective, being a virtuous person and giving confidence, communicating and having the ability to show empathy, satisfying needs and basing on health. **Conclusions:** The findings of this study may be used to prepare and evaluate the content of nursing courses. These findings are valuable to improve professional values and the awareness of nursing students on the meaning and importance of the concept of care..

ÖZ

Amaç:Bu çalışma hemşirelik öğrencilerinin bakım kavramına ilişkin metaforik algılarını analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. **Gereç ve Yöntem:** Çalışma fenomenolojik araştırma desenine sahiptir. Çalışma Mayıs 2021-Ocak 2022 tarihleri arasında Sağlık Bilimleri Üniversitesi Gülhane Hemşirelik Fakültesi'nde yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın evrenini 2021-2022 eğitim-öğretim yılı güz döneminde bir üniversitenin hemşirelik fakültesine kayıt yaptıran hemşirelik lisans öğrencileri oluşturdu. Nitel veriler tüm sınıflardan seçilen 78 öğrenci ile toplanmıştır. Veriler, sosyodemografik özelliklere ilişkin sorular ve bakım kavramına ilişkin boşluklu ifadeler içeren yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılarak toplanmıştır. **Bulgular:** Birden fazla metafor oluşturmalarına izin verilen katılımcılar 51 metafor ifade etmiştir. Bu metaforlar beş temaya dayanmaktadır: hemşireliğin mesleki değerlerine ve etik ilkelerine bağlılık, hasta ihtiyaçlarını bütüncül bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirme ve karşılama, erdemli bir insan olma ve güven verme, iletişim kurma ve empati gösterme becerisine sahip olma, ihtiyaçları karşılama ve sağlığı temel alma. **Sonuç:** Bu çalışmanın bulguları hemşirelik derslerinin içeriğini hazırlamak ve değerlendirmek için kullanılabilir. Bu bulgular mesleki değerlerin ve hemşirelik öğrencilerinin bakım kavramının anlam ve önemine ilişkin farkındalıklarının geliştirilmesi açısından değerlidir..

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INTRODUCTION

Nursing is a profession that provides unique and distinctive care to patients. It is a discipline that has a vast interest in the concept of care and the behaviors and processes related with care. The concepts of nursing and care are interconnected and closely interrelated. While the concept of care is sometimes defined a process that describes the relationship between patient and nurses and manifests itself in practical terms, it is sometimes considered as the evidence of nursing competence. There is no clear definition of this concept (1). Poor nursing quality and variations in nursing practices affect the quality of care. Besides, generation of indicators sensitive to nursing is mostly difficult due to the invisible nature of nursing care (2). There is a need for further research since the concept of care should be well-understood and its action-oriented reflections should be discussed.

Nursing education is a formal and planned educational activity during which the students learn the science and art of nursing with various methods. This process of education helps nursing students to provide safe and quality nursing care after graduation. The students, in this context, also learn the knowledge, skills and values of nursing conceptually at the intellectual level (3).

The concept of care is a general concept that is not limited to but primarily related with the field of nursing. Care is a universal aspect of human experience with a great variance in how the concept of care is conceptualized, researched and practiced. Scientific research on the concept of care will ensure the correct interpretation through conceptual analysis and reduce different perceptions about the concept (4).

Metaphor is one of the cognitive devices that give meaning to concepts, reflect with thought and control them. With their capacity to produce meaning, metaphors are powerful heuristic devices for nursing explorations. Identifying metaphors helps nurses to better understand their knowledge, skills and attitudes, reflect these traits and behaviors into their professional practices and creatively express their thoughts and feelings (5-8). Exploring nursing metaphors may provide opportunities to develop new understandings of nursing and challenge the metaphorical images that may constrain and/or obscure significant elements of holistic nursing practice (9).

Investigating the metaphors about the concept of care and perspectives of nursing students on the concept is necessary for a deep understanding of the subject. However, there is a limited number of studies on students' perceptions and interpretations of metaphors about care. This study aims to analyze metaphorical

perceptions of nursing students about nursing care using phenomenological method.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried out with metaphor analysis technique based on phenomenological method. Phenomenological research design provides the opportunity to conduct an in-depth examination of phenomena, which cannot be clearly defined using scientific evidence (10). The study was conducted in accordance with the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) guidelines (11). The pioneering study of Lakoff and Johnson on metaphors proposed the "cognitive metaphor theory". According to this theory, metaphors are cognitive structures that shape people's thoughts about the world and reality. Individuals are in an attempt to give a meaning to the world by making connections between the complex phenomena they encounter and the concrete concepts they experience (12).

Ethical statement

- The article does not include human or animal research.
- Our study has ethical approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee.
- Permission was obtained from Health Sciences University Gülhane Scientific Research Ethics Committee (dated 17.03.2022, numbered 2022/04-93).

Participants

Undergraduate nursing students, who enrolled to nursing faculty of a university during the fall semester of 2021-2022 academic year, constituted the population of the study. Voluntary nursing students from all classes were included to have approximately equal number of individuals from each class (1st year: 19, 2nd year: 15, 3rd year 28, 4th year: 16). Qualitative data was collected from 78 voluntary participants until data saturation was reached. Researchers were experienced in qualitative studies and did not have any opinion or attitudes that may influence the direction of the study. Participants and researchers frequently met in various educational settings and interpersonal communication and observations were made.

Limitations

Research analysis was carefully conducted in line with ethical and methodological principles to ensure methodological rigor and reliability. However, there may be a number of potential risks and drawbacks, including possible misunderstanding, misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the expressions of participants

during the in-depth interviews. To reduce these risks, the researcher responsible from analysis did not take part in the interviews. The other researcher that conducted the interviews evaluated the categorizations made by the first researcher and assessed whether there was a difference in the essence and equivalence of the interview data. However, the study was conducted at a single center so that the findings may not be generalizable. Besides, the participants did not confirm the accuracy of transcribed and thematized data.

Survey

The study was carried out between May 2021 and January 2022 at the Gülhane Faculty of Nursing in the University of Health Sciences. Data were collected during face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured interview form. In all interviews, an open-ended semi-structured interview form designed with the support of the literature was used in accordance with the aims and objectives of the research (13,14).

After obtaining data on sociodemographic characteristics, participants were asked to fill the blanks about the statements on care, such as “care is like”. Draft from, which was prepared using the literature, was revised after obtaining expert opinion from the department of psychiatric nursing. Interviews were recorded by a tape recorder and transcribed after each interview using Microsoft Word software. Content analysis method was used to analyze the metaphors expressed by the nursing students independently, meaningful expressions were decided upon and themes were formulated.

Instruments

Student information form: This form included questions on age, grade and gender of nursing students.

Semi-structured interview form: This form consisted of three questions aimed at assessing the participants’ metaphorical perceptions about the concept of nursing care. These questions included the followings:

What does nursing care mean to you? Fill in the following statement: Nursing care is like.....

What are the issues, philosophical ideas, values and situations that make nursing care unique? What is the relationship of nursing care with these values?

What is your metaphorical perception of the concept of care? Please explain..... (Using examples, the concept of metaphor was explained to the participants. Metaphor was defined as the label, meaning or a conceptual statement formed by a concept. For example, the metaphor of teacher is like the universe because s/he contains a huge world. Another example

is that the metaphor of death is like with a new life, fear and separation. Next, participants were asked to complete the expressions and questions were asked).

Data collection procedures: In-depth interviews were conducted with the voluntary students of the faculty of nursing. After obtaining informed consent, data were collected outside class hours during face-to-face interviews, which took place at a quiet place to allow the participants to express themselves comfortably. Statements were recorded by a tape recorder. We waited until all questions in the semi-structured form were answered and asked hidden/sub-questions to clarify the subject. Each interview took approximately 20-25 minutes.

Ethics

The article does not include human or animal research. Our study has ethical approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee. Permission was obtained from Health Sciences University Gülhane Scientific Research Ethics Committee (dated 17.03.2022, numbered 2022/04-93). Written and verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants. The study was performed in accordance with the principles of Helsinki Declaration. Students and researchers have equal rights in human rights issues, not participating in this study does not affect the academic success of the students.

Data analysis

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed one day after each interview. Colaizzi’s seven-step content analysis method was used to evaluate the data. Kappa Analysis was performed to measure the reliability of comparative fit. Interview data were analyzed separately by two researchers, meaningful expressions were revealed, and themes were formed. According to Colaizzi’s phenomenological analysis, important statements about the phenomenon were extracted about the whole content and the meanings were formulated (15).

In the naming phase, the metaphors expressed by the participant students were listed. In the classification (elimination and refinement) stage, the similarities and differences between these metaphors were evaluated and ranked. In the category development stage, the metaphor list and metaphor groups were classified. Expert opinion was taken during the validity and reliability phase (Nursing Fundamentals Faculty Member, Public Health Nursing Lecturer and Psychiatric Nursing Lecturer). The data were transferred to digital media in the final stage. The following criteria were used to analyze the metaphors created by the participants: A metaphor can be a term, a noun, or a phrase.

A metaphor can match features in the clinical domain with the target domain.

The name of the metaphor and related explanations may explain the analogic nature of the metaphor, the nature of the main body, or the situation.

All self-evaluation forms were reviewed four times.

Descriptive metaphors not related to the concept of nursing care were removed. Researchers identified the most important metaphors separately. After reaching unanimity, the first data were grouped according to the embedded meanings of the metaphors and converted into themes (16,17).

RESULTS

The study was carried out on 78 students that met the inclusion criteria. 5 students, who agreed to participate but did not complete the interview form, were excluded. % 83.3 of the participants were female, mean age was 20.44 ± 1.02 years, %35.9 were 3rd year nursing students and %53.8 lived with their parents (Table 1).

The participants expressed 51 metaphors about the concept of nursing care. These metaphors were grouped under five themes, namely, commitment to professional values and ethical principles of nursing (f=11), evaluating and meeting patient needs from a holistic perspective (f=9), being a virtuous person and giving confidence (f=10), communicating, and having the ability to show empathy (f=9), and satisfying needs and basing on health (f=12). Table 2 presented the codes for the metaphors about the concept of nursing care. Table 3 presented frequency and percentage analysis of the metaphors. Table 4 presented the themes and metaphors.

Metaphor category 1: Commitment to professional values and ethical principles of nursing (11 metaphors)

Nursing care is a universal process that starts from the principle of respect for human nature and appeals to the whole society. Nursing theorists have considered care as a moral virtue. Participants of our study emphasized the human and moral dimensions of the concept of care. Nursing as a profession has five fundamental values, namely, human dignity and respect, equality, justice, altruism, and integrity. One of the participants stated that nursing care meant self-sacrifice since the nurses took on a huge responsibility and performed vital tasks. Another participant used the words care-giver, helpful, honest, just, taking care of patient's well-being as metaphors to describe the concept of nursing care.

Metaphor category 2: Evaluating and meeting patient needs from a holistic perspective (9 metaphors)

Participants in our study defined nursing care as "survival of the patient", "dealing with the patient physically, spiritually and socially", "satisfying patient needs" and "completing their deficiencies". A holistic care was expressed as the best type of patient care. One participant defined nursing care as "all types of material and spiritual support given to a patient for psychological and physical treatment and meeting her/his needs". Another participant stated that nursing care is not only about the medical condition of a patient but also involves a holistic evaluation of the patient's psychosocial situation and social support systems.

Metaphor category 3: Being a virtuous person and giving confidence (10 metaphors)

Participants stated that care should be directed towards good and well-being and added that caring behaviors should target the well-being of patients. They expressed that the best care can be achieved through the feelings of compassion, sincerity, motherhood, morality, and reassuring. For example, one of the participants defined nursing care as sincerity, self-sacrifice, and self-confidence. Another participant stated that nursing care is like giving confidence.

Metaphor category 4: Communicating and having the ability to show empathy (9 metaphors)

Participants believed that caregiving nurse should have a healthy communication with the patient and show an empathy. They believed that sincerity was required to provide the best nursing care. One participant expressed the followings:

"I think a nurse should definitely be friendly, have a strong communication and be able to emphasize a little bit more. The patient feels more comfortable in such a case. You even may go and talk with the patient and then the patient starts to tell something comfortably. Sometimes, patients are afraid to say something... That is the power of communication" (18. participant).

Another participant stated the followings:

"It is necessary to implement nursing care plans. In order to further develop these plans, we communicate with different patients so that we experience what to do under different settings and perform these experiences after graduation" (22. participant).

Metaphor category 5: Satisfying needs and basing on health (12 metaphors)

Participants expressed that nursing care was a need for every patient that should be met by the nurses

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics (n=78)

Descriptive Variables		Number	Percentage
Age	19 (min)		
		16	20.5
	20	24	30.8
	21	27	34.6
	22	9	11.5
	23 (max)	2	2.6
Mean Age	$\bar{x} \pm SS: 20.44 \pm 1.02$		
Gender	Female	65	83.3
	Male	13	16.7
Year	1 st year	19	24.4
	2 nd year	15	19.2
	3 rd year	28	35.9
	4 th year	16	20.5
Type of Family	Nuclear	69	88.5
	Extended	7	9.0
	Other Parents	2	2.6
Place of Residence	House	42	53.8
	Dormitory	9	11.5
	Other	26	33.3
Presence of Nurses in the Family	Yes	1	1.3
	No	21	26.9
		57	73.1

Table 2. Codes of metaphors about the concept of nursing care

Metaphor Code	Metaphor Code	Metaphor Code	Metaphor Code
1 Justice	14 Equality	27 Providing care from all sides	40 Magic
2 Morality	15 Ethics	28 Humanistic approaches	41 Sincere
3 Hands of mothers	16 Empathy	29 Tolerance	42 Sincerity
4 Mother, father, brother and sister	17 Home	30 Goodwill	43 Patience
5 Mother	18 Gloves	31 Need	44 Respect
6 Holistic	19 Privacy	32 Human skeleton	45 Backbone of treatment
7 One-to-one communication	20 Trust	33 Self-renunciation	46 Hygiene
8 Base of a building	21 A safe harbor	34 Multidisciplinary	47 Hope
9 Friendliness	22 Good humor	35 Compassion	48 Conscience
10 Flower	23 Sun	36 Angel	49 Usefulness
11 Caring for a flower with care	24 Integrated	37 Self-sacrifice	50 Like the oil or salt
12 Integrity	25 Providing both material and spiritual support to the patient	38 All psychological, physical and spiritual dimensions	added to a meal
13 Honesty	26 Dealing with the patient physically, spiritually and socially	39 Everything done to relieve	51 Giving no harm

Table 4. Themes and metaphors about the concept of nursing care

Themes	Metaphors	Number of metaphors
Commitment To Professional Values And Ethical Principles Of Nursing	<i>Respect, Equality, Integrity, Honesty, Justice, Usefulness, Giving no harm, Privacy, Ethics, Multidisciplinary, Self-sacrifice</i>	11
Evaluating And Meeting Patient Needs From A Holistic Perspective	<i>Holistic, Integrated, Everything done to relieve, Providing both material and spiritual support to the patient, Dealing with the patient physically, spiritually and socially, Providing care from all sides, humanistic approaches, All psychological, physical and spiritual dimensions, Magic.</i>	9
Being A Virtuous Person And Giving Confidence	<i>Trust, A safe harbor, Goodwill, Morality, Compassion, Hands of mothers, Mother, father, brother and sister, Mother, Angel</i>	10
Communicating And Having The Ability To Show Empathy	<i>Empathy, One-to-one communication, Sincerity, Sincere, Good humor, Conscience, Tolerance, Patience, Friendliness, Self-renunciation,</i>	9
Satisfying Needs And Basing On Health	<i>Need, Like the oil or salt added to a meal, Human skeleton, Backbone of treatment, Base of a building, Caring for a flower with care, Sun, Flower, Hygiene Hope, Home, Gloves.</i>	12

devotedly. Besides, the participants stated that nursing care was essential to health and well-cared patients was essential for recovery. Additionally, the participants expressed that nursing care constituted the basis for health and a proper nursing care was required for recovery. One of the participants believed that nursing care was the backbone for life and treatment since the nurses were the people that interacted with the patients, provided care and helped them in need so that health status of the patients would deter if there was no nursing care. Another participant stated that nursing care is a vital intervention in the process of recovery just like the basis of a building.

DISCUSSION

Despite the higher number of qualitative studies on the metaphorical perceptions of graduates of nursing studies, less has been studied on undergraduate students. Our study examined the metaphors of nursing students on nursing care and proposed themes based on these metaphors. These five metaphors included “commitment to professional values and ethical principles of nursing, evaluating and meeting patient needs from a holistic perspective, being a virtuous person and giving confidence, communicating and having the ability to show empathy, and satisfying needs and basing on health.

The strength of a scientific field is maintained by the continuous relationship between the phase of research and the production of knowledge and theory. Similarly, the discipline of nursing survives with continuous progress and the change of scientific information (18). Proper definition of the concepts of nursing is essential for the scientific development of the field of nursing (19). The concept of care, which is a vital concept for

undergraduate nursing education, should be addressed to improve the quality of nursing care and reveal technical and scientific competencies of professionals (5,20-22).

An existing study reported that explaining the concept of care requires multiple metaphors since the concept can't be explained with a single word. The study grouped the metaphors about nursing care into the themes of promoter, protector, developer, emotional component, focus of nursing and relief. Based on such a study, we may suggest that sharing the results of such studies in nursing education and continuous education programs may contribute to the development of professional and clinical development (5). Another study on nurses' metaphors of practice revealed four themes, namely the character of nursing work, power and empowerment, nursing as a growth process, and the relational nature of nursing (9).

A qualitative study on the care perceptions of 19 final-year undergraduate nursing students asked the participants to write incidents in which they observed nursing behaviors conducted in caring and noncaring ways. The study reported that nursing students should observe appropriate clinical care behaviors and suggested that more emphasis should be paid on how the definition of the concept of care was formed and developed during the process of education (23). Another study on the perceptions about nursing care found that nursing care was affected by time management, resources, programming, and the factors at professional and organizational levels (7).

The concept of care includes the abilities to listen to patient needs and demands, communicate with patients, understand their feeling, and provide a conscious and creative health service. A study found

that overall caring abilities of Chinese undergraduate nursing students significantly improved after internship. The study suggested that nursing educator and clinical nurse may “emphasize the importance of caring ability development in internship planning and encourage nursing students to engage more with patients” (24).

After an extensive literature review, a study found that compassion, relationship and professional action were the main defining attributes of the concept of nursing care. The study underlined the importance of the communicative, caring and advocacy roles of nurses and their compassionate professional action in the promotion of individual and community health (1). However, discrepancies in metaphorical interpretations may be expected since these interpretations are dependent on researchers' socio-cultural background, personal experiences, professional training, language, and other factors (25).

Metaphor category 1: Commitment to professional values and ethical principles of nursing (11 metaphors)

We coded 11 metaphors about the theme of “commitment to professional values and ethical principles of nursing”, which was related with human and moral dimensions of moral care. One study, which aimed to measure the professional values of registered nurses and determine whether these values were significantly related to post licensure ethics education and the years of experience in nurses, found that “organizational commitment to support of nurses' professional values through investment in ethics education may produce positive enduring consequences, including, workplace retention and high-quality patient care” (26). Due to this reason, nursing students should receive courses on values education and develop professional behaviors during their undergraduate study (27).

Metaphor category 2: Evaluating and meeting patient needs from a holistic perspective (9 metaphors)

The students expressed that physical, spiritual and social aspects of patient needs should be addressed and interventions to meet these needs should be planned to maintain the survival of patients. Holistic care is a complex term with no clear definition. It provides an in-depth understanding of diverse needs of patients and has important implications for healthcare systems. A study that used the hybrid model to present a concept analysis of holistic care extracted two main themes, namely, holistic care for offering a comprehensive model for caring, and holistic care for improving patients' and nurses' conditions. The study suggested that conceptual analysis of the term may encourage educators to

integrate holistic care in nursing curriculum and clarify its meaning in nursing practice (28).

Metaphor category 3: Being a virtuous person and giving confidence (10 metaphors)

Participants stated that the concept of care was about turning to what is good and beautiful and showing beneficial behaviors in every situation. The virtues of kindness, honesty, courage and fairness are considered as positive elements of personality in modern dictionaries. These virtues are expected in healthcare, especially in nursing care (29). An article that discussed the necessity of using the philosophy of ethics and virtue as a framework suggested that nurse educators should teach rules of courtesy, support nursing students in establishing healthy relations with patients and colleagues and develop effective strategies within this context (30).

Metaphor category 4: Communicating and having the ability to show empathy (9 metaphors)

Participant students stated that nurses' communication and empathy skills had a positive impact on care. A study on Turkish nursing students found that communication training in nursing had a positive impact on empathy and communication skills of nursing students (31). Another experimental study on the effects of empathy training on the empathic skills of nurses provided empathy training to the intervention group using group and creative drama techniques. Pretest and posttest were administered to the control and the intervention groups and the intervention group scored significantly higher than the control group in the posttest (32).

Metaphor category 5: Satisfying needs and basing on health (12 metaphors)

Participants stated care is a need for individuals and nurses should meet this need with devotion. Human beings are the primary focus of nursing and humans, and their needs should be well-understood to provide the best care. Health services support patients and their relatives to receive safe and quality healthcare they need. As the largest group of health professionals globally, nurses play a central role in this balancing act. Although care is a universal aspect of human experience, there are wide variations in how care is conceptualized, researched, and practiced.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, metaphors may be used as strong research tool to understand, reveal and explain cognitive

images related with the concept of nursing care. They provide clues about nurses' perception of care.

In our study, nursing students produced 51 metaphors related to the concept of care. Mother, justice, compassion, empathy, respect, equality and morality were the most frequently expressed caring metaphors. These metaphors; adherence to professional values and ethical principles of nursing, evaluating and meeting patient needs with a holistic perspective, being a virtuous person and giving confidence, communicating and empathizing, meeting the needs.

In this article, the care metaphors of Turkish students, who are a different culture, were investigated. The most important feature of the article is the effect of Turkish culture in metaphors.

Perceptions about the concept of care begin to form in the first years of nursing education. In this context, the findings of this study can be used in the preparation and evaluation of the content of nursing courses. In addition, these findings are valuable in terms of improving nursing students' professional values and awareness of the meaning and importance of the concept of care. This study can shed light on nursing educators, students and also the literature.

The metaphors produced as a result of the research can guide students' basic and advanced nursing education. The use of metaphor helps nursing students to understand the concept of care, develop their creativity and their own nursing philosophies.

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