

Analysis of Nursing Students' Perceptions Through Metaphors for Nurse and Patient Concepts

Hemşirelik Öğrencilerinin Hemşire ve Hasta Kavramlarına İlişkin Algılarının Metaforlarla Analizi

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Metaphors are mental tools used to understand and explain abstract and complex events. Metaphor is a way of interpreting, likening, and expressing one thing in terms of another. The aim of this study is to determine the perceptions of nursing students regarding the concepts of "nurse" and "patient" through metaphors.

Methods: This qualitative study included 238 students studying at the Nursing Faculty of a university. Content analysis method was used to analyze the qualitative data obtained. Data analysis was completed with coding and debugging, category creation, validity and reliability, frequency and percentage calculation, and interpretation stages.

Results: Students produced 100 valid metaphors about the concept of nurse and 78 valid metaphors for patient. The highest frequency among nurse metaphors were mother (24.7%) and angel (8.8%), and the highest frequency among patient metaphors were infants or children (40.0%) and flower (6.6 %).

Conclusion: It was found that the nurse was mostly compared to the mother and the patient to the child/baby, the nurse's role as a caregiver was emphasized, but she was not perceived as a professional in this role, and the patient was seen as someone in need of care, love, and compassion.

Keywords: Metaphor, nursing student, nurse concept, patient concept

ÖZ

Amaç: Metaforlar, soyut ve karmaşık olayları anlamak ve açıklamak için kullanılan zihinsel araçlardır. Metafor, bir şeyi başka bir şeye göre yorumlama, benzetme ve ifade etme biçimidir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, hemşirelik öğrencilerinin "hemşire" ve "hasta" kavramlarına ilişkin algılarını metaforlar aracılığıyla belirlemektir.

Yöntemler: Bu nitel araştırmaya bir üniversitenin Hemşirelik Fakültesi'nde öğrenim gören 238 öğrenci katılmıştır. Elde edilen nitel verilerin analizinde içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Veri analizi kodlama ve hata ayıklama, kategori oluşturma, geçerlik ve güvenilirlik, frekans ve yüzde hesaplama ve yorumlama aşamaları ile tamamlanmıştır.

Bulgular: Öğrenciler hemşire kavramına ilişkin 100 geçerli metafor ve hasta kavramına ilişkin 78 geçerli metafor üretmiştir. Hemşire metaforları arasında en yüksek sıklık anne (%24,7) ve melek (%8,8), hasta metaforları arasında en yüksek sıklık bebek veya çocuk (%40,0) ve çiçek (%6,6) olmuştur.

Sonuç: Hemşirenin en çok anneye, hastanın ise çocuğa/bebeğe benzetildiği, hemşirenin bakım verici rolüne vurgu yapıldığı ancak bu rolünde profesyonel olarak algılanmadığı, hastanın bakıma sevgi ve şefkate muhtaç biri olarak görüldüğü bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Metafor, hemşirelik öğrencisi, hemşire kavramı, hasta kavramı



INTRODUCTION

The concepts of human, environment, health, and nursing are the 4 metaparadigms of nursing that shape nursing education, practice, and research. Understanding nursing metaparadigms enables nursing students to develop their professional identity. The focus of nursing is on healthy or sick people, and nursing is a helping profession focused on caregiving. Since the foundation of nursing education is the explanation of nursing paradigms, it is important to determine the perceptions of nursing students, who will carry the profession to the future, about nurses and patients. Students' perceptions of these concepts can be decisive in planning nursing education, developing new teaching strategies, motivating students, and thus deepening the understanding of nursing education. Moreover, revealing nurse candidates' perceptions about the concepts of "nurse" and "patient" is also important for bringing a new point of view to the profession. Students' perceptions about these concepts are closely associated with their previous experiences, lives, knowledge, and vocational training.¹⁻³ Students' perceptions of patients and nurses may undergo positive or negative changes from their classes as first class to fourth class. Positive change is a desired and expected situation. However, the changes in negative perceptions of the students during the learning process may require some changes regarding the teaching methods, course contents, and learning environments.

Metaphors are powerful tools in revealing individuals' mental images and they reflect peoples' characteristics. A metaphor can be defined as stating a concept or condition with another concept, a condition based on the use of the language for symbolic purposes.⁴ The use of metaphors to explain concepts improves creativity in individuals by connecting the unknown to the known and trying to establish new connections between concepts. The metaphors related to nursing are important for reflecting different thoughts on their roles and responsibilities in nursing health care. Metaphors affect how nurses describe nursing and their being able to implement their visions as holistic and patient-focused in continuing their roles within health care. Their own image of nursing is included within the metaphors used by nurses. Nurses, in the study of metaphors, are apprehending their own experiences on the subject of nursing and patient.^{5,6}

There are studies in which the perceptions of nurses or nursing students on different subjects are determined through metaphors.⁶⁻⁹ However, there are few studies in Turkey to determine the perceptions of nursing students about the concepts of nursing and patient using metaphors.^{5,10-12} In this study, we aimed to determine nursing students' perceptions about the concepts of "nurse" and "patient" through the use of metaphors. Answers to the following questions were sought in the research:

1. What are nursing students' metaphors about the concepts of "nurse" and "patient"?
2. In which categories are these metaphors included in terms of their common features?
3. Is there any difference between freshmen and senior students in terms of categorical distribution?

METHODS

Aim

The study aimed to determine nursing students' perceptions about the concepts of "nurse" and "patient" through the use of metaphors.

Study Design

This study used a qualitative and quantitative research approach conducted according to the phenomenology model to determine nursing students' perceptions about the concepts of "nurse" and "patient" through the use of metaphors

Participants

The research population comprised freshmen (n=268) and senior (n=310) undergraduate nursing students (N=578) studying by the nursing faculty of a university in the 2016-2017 academic year. Most senior students were not in the faculty because they worked in the hospital for an internship. Some were excluded because they did not want to participate in the study. The study included, volunteers who were available at the time of the study, a total of 238 students; 165 freshmen and 73 seniors.

Data Collection

Research data were collected via a "Student Presentation Form" and "Metaphor Registration Form." The Metaphor Registration Form is a simple form allowing participants to write the features attributed from the source to the subject of the metaphor and the source of the metaphors relating to the nurse-patient concepts. In this form, the following expressions were available: "nurse is like a". This is because....." and "patient is like a This is because.....". Students were asked to write only 1 metaphor for each concept and a "because" statement in relation to and explaining that metaphor.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used for the analysis of qualitative data obtained. Data analysis followed the following 4 stages.

1. Coding and debugging stage: In this stage, the metaphors produced by the students were alphabetized and numbered by researchers and metaphor frequency was determined.
2. Categorization stage: "Nurse" and "patient" metaphors and "reasons" produced by the students were examined and classified using conceptual categories determined by the researchers.
3. Validity and reliability stage: Research validity was provided by explaining all the processes step-by-step in the study. To increase the reliability of the classifications, however, the study was first classified separately by researchers and finalized by comparison. For reliability, the formula of $\text{reliability} = \frac{\text{consensus}}{\text{consensus} + \text{dissidence}} \times 100$ formula was applied.¹³ To ensure the reliability of the research, expert opinion was sought to determine whether the metaphorical images given under conceptual categories obtained in the research represented a conceptual category. The matching performed by the experts was compared with the researchers' categories. In comparisons, numbers of "consensus" and "dissidence" were detected and reliability of the research was determined as 92% for nurse metaphors and 91% for patient metaphors. A matching percentage of 70% is accepted as reaching a reliability percentage.¹³
4. Frequency and percentage calculation and interpretation stage: In this stage, frequencies of metaphors were subtracted and their percentage was found and interpreted under conceptual categories.
5. Stage of transferring data to computer: Information about students, metaphors and the data of conceptual categories

represented by metaphors were analyzed by transferring them to SPSS statistics program. The research was evaluated in the 95% CI and $P < .05$ significance level.

Ethical Considerations

Permission was given by the Atatürk University Faculty of Nursing Ethics Committee (2017-5/6) and Deanship of the Faculty of Nursing to conduct the research. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, 238 students produced 100 metaphors for nurse concept. From these metaphors, those having the highest frequency were mother (24.7%) and angel (8.8%).

In Table 2, the metaphors produced by nursing students in relation to the nurse concept are shown in 11 conceptual categories. Regarding the nurse concept, the category with the highest frequency was “nurse as a care provider” (30.6%).

Examples of metaphor sentences of the specified categories are given below.

Nurse as a care provider: “Nurse is like a mother. This is because the mother takes care of her child and the nurse of his/her patient.”

Nurse as an artist: “Nurse is like a sculptor. This is because just as a sculptor wants to give the best shape to his/her work carefully, a nurse also performs the care of his/her patient meticulously and carefully and tries to obtain the best result.”

Table 1. Distribution of the Metaphors in Relation to the Nurse Concept (n = 238)

Metaphor	f	%	Metaphor	f	%	Metaphor	f	%
1. Sister	1	0.42	35. Porter	1	0.42	69. Bus	1	0.42
2. Immature flower	2	0.84	36. Patient's right hand	1	0.42	70. Private Sector	1	0.42
3. Tree	2	0.84	37. Sculptor	1	0.42	71. Cake	1	0.42
4. Wax strips	1	0.42	38. Servant	5	2.10	72. Pollyanna	1	0.42
5. Octopus	1	0.42	39. Khidr	1	0.42	73. Painter	1	0.42
6. Algae	1	0.42	40. Speedy Gonzalez	1	0.42	74. Robot	1	5.04
7. Worker	4	1.68	41. Businessman	2	0.84	75. Wind	1	0.42
8. Pollster	1	0.42	42. Worker	2	0.84	76. Watch	1	0.42
9. Mother	5	24.78	43. Light	1	0.42	77. Very patient person	1	0.42
10. Artery	1	0.42	44. Hero/heroine	1	0.42	78. Poet	1	0.42
11. Moon	2	0.84	45. Cactus	2	0.84	79. Stoooge	1	0.42
12. Father	1	0.42	46. Heart	1	0.42	80. Devil	1	0.42
13. Gardener	7	2.94	47. Captain	2	0.84	81. Poetry book	1	0.42
14. Ballet dancer	1	0.42	48. Snow	2	0.84	82. Confidant	1	0.42
15. Prime Minister	2	0.84	49. Ant	2	0.84	83. Water	5	2.10
16. Brain	1	0.42	50. Discoverer	1	0.42	84. Superman	2	0.84
17. Chameleon	1	0.42	51. Butterfly	1	0.42	85. Broom	1	0.42
18. Witch	1	0.42	52. Slave	2	0.84	86. Jug	1	0.42
19. Teapot	1	0.42	53. Scarecrow	1	0.42	87. Mechanic	3	1.26
20. Flower	1	0.42	54. Fair-weather friend	1	0.42	88. Disposable injector	1	0.42
21. Farmer	2	0.84	55. Hairdresser	1	0.42	89. Cooking pot	1	0.42
22. Experimentalist professor	2	0.84	56. Sandbag	1	0.42	90. Heavy balance arm	1	0.42
23. Sea	1	0.42	57. Savior	1	0.42	91. Soil	2	0.84
24. Full suitcase	1	0.42	58. Woman with the lamp	1	0.42	92. Rain	1	0.42
25. Friend	4	1.68	59. Sulky	1	0.42	93. Adhesive	1	0.42
26. World	1	0.42	60. Machine	2	0.84	94. Building block	1	0.42
27. Pharmacy	1	0.42	61. Material	2	0.84	95. Cafeteria	1	0.42
28. Flashlight	1	0.42	62. Folded piece of paper put under the defective leg of the table	1	0.42	96. Star	1	0.42
29. Laborer	1	0.42	63. The oppressed	1	0.42	97. Path	1	0.42
30. Aesthete	1	0.42	64. Angel	2	8.82	98. Manager	1	0.42
31. Loser	1	0.42	65. Candle	1	0.42	99. Dolphinfish	1	0.42
32. Football player	1	0.42	66. Music	1	0.42	100. Jewelry with its value unknown	1	0.42
33. Sun	10	4.20	67. Point	1	0.42			
34. Bobo doll	1	0.42	68. Teacher	2	0.84			

Table 2. Distribution of the Metaphors in Relation to the Nurse Concept to Conceptual Categories (n = 238)

Categories	Metaphors	n	%
Nurse as a care provider	Mother, farmer, gardener, mechanic, snow	73	30.67
Nurse as an artist	Sculptor, poet, poetry book, painter, music, aesthete, ballet dancer, flower, butterfly, hairdresser, immature flower	12	5.04
Nurse as a person showing love, affection, and tolerance	Sister, heart, cake, dolphin fish, Pollyanna, fair-weather friend, very patient person, confident	12	5.04
Nurse as a person who performs a sacred duty or has superior powers	Savior, angel, khidir, hero/heroine, Superman, Speedy Gonzalez, the woman with the lamp	28	11.76
Nurse as a guide	Captain, flashlight, teacher, candle, brain, discoverer, watch, path	10	4.20
Nurse as a hardworking person	Worker, ant, octopus, laborer, football player	7	2.94
Nurse as a life source	World, sun, moon, sea, soil, water, star, rain, wind, light, artery, tree, building block, algae	30	12.60
Nurse as a problem solver	Jug, cooking pot, teapot, wax strips, point, broom, adhesive, pharmacy, patient's right hand, cafeteria	10	4.20
Nurse as an oppressed person	Slave, servant, disposable injector, sandbag, worker, stooge, loser, folded piece of paper put under the defective leg of the table, the oppressed, heavy balance arm, full suitcase, bobo doll, robot, machine, pollster, porter, material, bus, jewelry with its value unknown	40	16.80
Nurse as an authority	Prime minister, manager, father, private sector, experimentalist professor, businessman	9	3.78
Nurse as an evil person	Devil, cactus, witch, chameleon, sulky, scarecrow	7	2.94

Table 3. Distribution of the Metaphors in Relation to the Patient Concept (n = 210).

Metaphor	f	%	Metaphor	f	%	Metaphor	f	%
1. Tree	2	0.95	27. Creaking door	1	0.47	53. Dream	1	.47
2. Car	1	0.47	28. Rainbow	1	0.47	54. Very patient person	1	0.47
3. Bee	1	0.47	29. Eye	2	0.95	55. Nervous system	1	0.47
4. Garden	1	0.47	30. People	1	0.47	56. Devil	2	0.95
5. Baby/child	84	40.0	31. Hospital owner	1	0.47	57. Poem	1	0.47
6. Building	1	0.47	32. Wet cat	1	0.47	58. Spoiled child	3	1.42
7. Plant	5	2.38	33. Unwanted hair	1	0.47	59. A person falling into water	1	0.47
8. Bomb	2	0.95	34. Cactus	1	0.47	60. Cat with his tail between his legs	3	1.42
9. Empty box	1	0.47	35. Pencil	1	0.47	61. Painting	1	0.47
10. Broken watch	3	1.42	36. Bird with a broken wing	2	0.95	62. Cereal	1	0.47
11. Broken television	1	0.47	37. Galanthus	1	0.47	63. Wheelchair	2	0.95
12. Wheat	1	0.47	38. Crow	1	0.47	64. Seed	1	0.47
13. Chameleon	2	0.95	39. Snowball	1	0.47	65. Soil	3	1.42
14. Monster	3	1.42	40. Mother-in-law	1	0.47	66. Long and boring novel	1	0.47
15. Tea cup	1	0.47	41. Butterfly	2	0.95	67. Rain	1	0.47
16. Flower	14	6.66	42. Undiscovered place	1	0.47	68. Jigsaw	1	0.47
17. Rotten plant	1	0.47	43. Kiwi	1	0.47	69. Tree with its leaves being dropped	1	0.47
18. Dripping faucet	1	0.47	44. Broken heart	1	0.47	70. Tree with its leaves being faded	2	0.95
19. Lab rat	2	0.95	45. Continent	1	0.47	71. Wounded lion	2	0.95
20. Sea	1	0.47	56. Little sibling	1	0.47	72. Wounded creature	1	0.47
21. Beggar	1	0.47	47. Fruit	1	0.47	73. Wounded gazelle	2	0.95
22. Nature	1	0.47	48. Customer	2	0.95	74. Wounded friend	1	0.47
23. A person having immunity	1	0.47	49. Ungrateful person	1	0.47	75. Old lion	1	0.47
24. World	2	0.95	50. Student	4	1.90	76. Nestling	3	1.42
25. Handcraft	1	0.47	51. The line between life and death	1	0.47	77. Orphan	2	0.95
26. Sprout	1	0.47	52. Boss	2	0.95	78. Torn paper	2	0.95

Table 4. Distribution of the Metaphors in Relation to the Patient Concept to Conceptual Categories (n = 210)

Categories	Metaphors	n	%
Patient as a person in need of care, attention, and affection	Baby/child, plant, flower, tree, car, nestling, tree with its leaves being faded, wounded gazelle, wounded friend, soil, wet cat, little sibling, wheat, seed, customer, cereal, bee, world, garden	128	60.95
Patient as an artwork/product	Building, handcraft, rainbow, poem, dream, people, sea, nature, rain, fruit, kiwi, painting, undiscovered place	14	6.66
Patient as a sensitive person	Butterfly, eye, broken heart, Galanthus, sprout, pencil, bird with a broken wing, orphan, a person falling into water, tree with its leaves being dropped, the line between life and death, wounded creature	16	7.61
Patient as a person with lack of knowledge	Student, teacup, empty box	6	2.85
Patient as a person on others' back	Wheelchair, long and boring novel,	3	1.42
Patients as an unwanted/unlovable person	Spoiled child, devil, cactus, unwanted hair, ungrateful person, boss, hospital owner, monster, crow, bomb, wounded lion, snowball, beggar, chameleon, a person having immunity, mother in law, nervous system	26	12.38
Patient as a useless person	Dripping faucet, broken watch, broken television, old lion, torn paper, rotten plant, creaking door	10	4.76
Patient as an oppressed person	Lab rat, jigsaw very patient person, cat with his tail between his legs	7	3.33

Nurse as a source of life: "Nurse is like rain. This is because dry soil becomes green with rain. The nurse also provides care by raining on the patient resembling dry soil."

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that 210 students produced 78 metaphors for patient concept. From these metaphors, baby or child (40.0%) was the metaphor with the highest frequency.

As shown in Table 4, the metaphors produced by the nursing students in relation to the patient concept are gathered under 8 conceptual categories. Regarding the patient concept, the category with the highest frequency was "patient as a person in need of care, attention, and affection," (60.9%) while the category with the lowest frequency was "patient as a person on others' back" (1.4%).

Example metaphor sentences of the specified categories are given below.

Patient as a person in need of care, attention, and affection: "Patient is like a baby. This is because the patient also needs care."

Table 5. Comparison of the Categories Where the Metaphors Produced by the Students Are Included According to the Classes

Categories	Freshmen		Senior		Test and P
	n	%	n	%	
Nurse categories					
Positive categories ^a	134	81.2	48	65.8	$\chi^2=6.722$
Negative categories ^b	31	18.8	25	34.2	$P=.010$
Patient categories					
Positive categories ^c	127	80.4	37	71.2	$\chi^2=1.947$
Negative categories ^d	31	19.6	15	28.6	$P=.163$

^aNurse as a care provider, nurse as an artist, nurse as a person showing love, affection, and tolerance, nurse as a person who performs a sacred duty or has superior powers, nurse as a guide, nurse as a hardworking person, nurse as a source of life, nurse as a problem solver; ^bNurse as an oppressed person, nurse as an authority, nurse as an evil person; ^cPatient as a person in need of care, attention and affection, patient as an artwork/product, patient as a sensitive person, patient as a person with lack of knowledge, patient as a person on others' back; ^dPatient as an unwanted/unlovable person, patient as a useless person, patient as an oppressed person.

Patient as an artwork/product: "Patient is like a kiwi. This is because s/he looks tough, but when you peel it you can see his/her soft inner face like a kiwi."

Patient as a useless person: "Patient is like a broken watch. This is because activities of a sick person are also incorrect or nonfunctional."

When Table 5 is examined, it is determined that in positive categories, 81.2% of the nurse metaphors were produced by the freshmen undergraduates and 65.8% by the senior undergraduates. The difference between the classes was statistically significant ($\chi^2=6.722$, $P=.010$). We found that in positive categories, 80.4% of the patient metaphors were produced by the freshmen undergraduates and 71.2% by the senior undergraduates. There was no statistically significant difference between the grades ($P > .05$).

DISCUSSION

The fact that the students developed 100 different metaphors about the concept of nurses means that their perception of the subject is rich and diverse. Students associated the nurse substantially to a "mother" thereby suggesting that they perceived the nurse in his/her care providing role. Students emphasized the indispensability of the nurse with vital metaphors such as the sun, water, sea, and soil; however, because they used metaphors such as robot, slave, servant, and cactus, this indicates that they also have negative perceptions about nursing (Table 1). In many previous studies, it was determined that the metaphor of "mother" was used most for nurses^{10,11,14} Kale et al⁹ found that of all the metaphors, 10 of them had positive, 9 of them had negative, and 9 of them had both positive and negative imagery. The most frequently used metaphors were "peon," "angel," and "slave. In a qualitative study of vocational perceptions of senior undergraduate nursing students conducted by Ozmen et al.¹⁵ the authors stated that the students expressed (by painting) their positive images in regard to the nursing profession as "smiling, debonair, having a positive effect, the sun, angel, brain, heart, information," as well as negative images of "bogeyman, sulky, tough, doctor's assistant, having a prejudiced view, witch and not respected." These findings show how students position themselves in the nurse-patient relationship.

When these studies are examined, we see that students have both positive and negative opinions about the nursing profession, but positive expressions for defining the profession were more prevalent. When the metaphors developed by the students in our study were divided into categories, we found that the “care provider” role (30.6%) of the nurse was most commonly emphasized. This may be because the basic role of nurses is “to care.” Looking at the metaphors such as mother, farmer, and gardener in this category, it can be considered that students perceive the nurse as “care provider” but not necessarily as a professional in this role. It is thought that the metaphors developed in the categories of “artist,” “person showing love and affection,” “guide” stemmed from the relationship built with the basic values of nursing, while the definition as “a person who performs a sacred duty and has superior powers” is derived from the “holiness” attributed to nursing throughout its history. Services such as healing, giving care, and giving uncovered help were welcomed throughout the history of mankind and in all religions, and those who gave this service were considered holy. The perception of the students about nurses as a “source of life” may be because these students perceived the nursing profession as indispensable and vital for life. 16.8% of the students using metaphors such as slave, servant, and porter—which express that nurses are oppressed—suggest that these students perceived that nurses’ autonomy and professional power are inadequate and that the nurse is oppressed by powerful groups and desperate. This may have a negative effect on students’ professional and individual development. It is thought that metaphors such as devil, cactus, witch, chameleon, sulky, and scarecrow in the category of the nurse as an evil person originated from negative nursing attitudes experienced by students (Table 2).

A significant proportion of the students (40.0%) who likened the patient to a child/baby metaphor and similarly to wounded creatures was associated with their perceptions of patients as dependent, in need of protection and help of others (Table 3). The students using this metaphor for the patient also used the mother metaphor for the nurse. In a patient–nurse relationship, the person in need of care cannot meet his/her requirements and is less powerful than the one providing care. Namely, there is an asymmetric power relationship between the care provider and the person who needs care.¹⁶ The fact that the students define the patient as a child/baby shows that in this asymmetric power relationship, they perceive the patients as vulnerable, weak people requiring tender care. Traditional attitudes such as love and affection and sacrifice expected in the relationship between the patient and the nurse in nursing care have, however, left their place to more professional attitudes such as empathy, care, and respect. This suggests that students perceive the patient–nurse relationship as more traditional. Thus, they see the patient as in need of love and affection, passive, obeying the decisions, and inactive, while the nurse is affectionate, active, decision-maker, and effective. Perceiving the patient as a child or a baby can lead to negative nurse attitudes such as disregarding his/her preferences, respectability and personality, and underestimating him/her. However, in the contemporary nursing model, the patient is in a respected and important position and is encouraged to make his/her own decisions (Table 3).

Although the 60.9% of students who saw the patients as in need of care, love, and affection is explained by the fact that persons undergo emotional change during the disease experience, this attention and affection should definitely be supported with

professional attitudes and behaviors. It is thought-provoking that 12.3% of the students perceived the patient as an unwanted/unlovable person such as devil, cactus, ungrateful person, monster, crow, bomb, beggar, and boss (Table 4). This may be due to negative patient attitudes encountered by students; the students perceiving the patients who do not exhibit passive attitude and behavior, have demands negatively or the incorrect choice of profession. During the students’ education, these perceptions should be considered. In their study on tough patient perceptions of the nursing and medical students, Acar et al.¹⁷ stated that according to the students of both groups the patient with whom communication is not made is perceived as a tough patient. Gaining healthy communication skills based on empathy and trust with the patient will prevent nurses’ perceptions of the patients as being tough. One reason for the students perceiving the patients as an unwanted and unlovable person may be that the students’ communication skills may not be adequately developed.

The fact that the senior undergraduate students had a greater rate of negative nurse metaphors than the freshmen undergraduate students may be due to the problems they experienced during their education (Table 5). In a study conducted by Ergun et al.¹⁸ it was also determined that the vocational perceptions of freshmen undergraduate students are more positive than those of senior undergraduate students. In a similar study conducted by Yeşilbakan et al.¹² it was stated that 24% of the metaphors were negative which produced by postgraduate nursing students for the concept of nursing. The fact that the students who are coming to the end of their vocational education have more negative perceptions is thought-provoking in terms of vocational awareness process. Negative professional perception may lead to burnout of occupational members. For this reason, it is important to investigate the reasons of the negative perceptions of nursing students and to make arrangements to eliminate these reasons. The positive aspects of helping students throughout their education. On the other hand, examples that have achieved significant success in the profession can be presented and positive satisfaction elements that will make students satisfied with the profession can be emphasized.

CONCLUSIONS

In this research examining the metaphors developed by students regarding nurse and patient concepts, we found that the nurse is most often likened to a mother, while the patient is likened to a baby or child; the caregiving role of the nurse is emphasized, but she/he is not perceived professionally in this role; and the patient is seen as a person in need of care, love, and affection. Negative nurse metaphors are more common in senior undergraduate students. In accordance with these results, when planning nursing education, it is suggested that students’ current perceptions about basic nursing concepts be considered. In addition to the human features such as love and affection that the nurses should have, professional attitudes and behaviors should be introduced. During the development of students’ understanding throughout their education, it is important to be aware that it is difficult to change perceptions, and thus, studies to change the nurse and patient image in society are needed.

Implications for Nursing Practice

The metaphors determined by the students in this study can guide basic and advanced nursing education activities. It can strengthen the communication between educator and student. The use of metaphors helps students understand nursing concepts and can enable them to develop their creativity and their

own nursing philosophies. The metaphors determined in the study can contribute to the efforts to correct the negative perceptions of nursing students. The results of the study may provide an opportunity to examine what might otherwise be implicit or even misunderstood in nursing education. This study can be used in planning nursing education and improving nursing image. In addition, creating a positive patient perception in the minds of students who are nurses of the future can increase the quality of patient care.

Limitation of the Research

The results of this study are limited to the date of data collection and population.

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval was received for this study from Atatürk University Faculty of Nursing Ethics Committee (Date: 31.05.2017, No: 2017-5/6).

Informed Consent: Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants who participated in this study.

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