

Araştırma Makalesi/ Research Article

Freshman Nursing Students' Perceptions of Their Profession: A Study of Metaphor

Hemşirelik 1. Sınıf Öğrencilerinin Mesleklerine İlişkin Algıları: Bir Metafor Çalışması

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Metaphorical analysis is important in terms of evaluating the nursing profession from the perspective of nurses and understanding the profession. The study was conducted to analyze the perceptions of freshman nursing students about their profession through metaphors.

Methods: This study was carried out in a qualitative design. The study was carried out with 94 students. The data that did not include any metaphor sources were eliminated and the study was concluded with the data from 61 students. The data were collected through the Personal Information Form and the semi-structured interview form with a metaphor question. The data were analyzed using metaphor analysis.

Results: The findings revealed that the freshman nursing students identified 40 metaphors for their profession. The three most common metaphors were mother (n= 8), angel (n= 4), and column (n= 4).

Conclusions: Metaphors are important in discovering nursing students' insights into their profession. The findings indicate that the majority of the students have a positive perception and perspective on their profession.

Keywords: Metaphor, nursing, perception of nursing, student

ÖZ

Amaç: Metaforik analiz, hemşirelik mesleğinin hemşireler açısından değerlendirilmesi ve mesleğin anlaşılması açısından önemlidir. Araştırma, birinci sınıf hemşirelik öğrencilerinin mesleğe ilişkin algılarını metaforlar aracılığıyla analiz etmek amacıyla yapılmıştır.

Yöntem: Bu çalışma nitel desende gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma 94 öğrenci ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Herhangi bir metafor kaynağı içermeyen veriler elenmiş ve 61 öğrenciden elde edilen verilerle çalışma sonlandırılmıştır. Veriler Kişisel Bilgi Formu ve metafor sorusu ile yarı yapılandırılmış form aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Veriler metafor analizi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir.

Bulgular: Bulgular, birinci sınıf hemşirelik öğrencilerinin meslekleri için 40 metafor belirlediklerini ortaya koymuştur. En yaygın üç metafor anne (n= 8), melek (n= 4) ve sütun (n= 4) olmuştur.

Sonuç: Metaforlar, hemşirelik öğrencilerinin mesleklerine ilişkin iç görüşlerini keşfetmelerinde önemlidir. Bulgular, öğrencilerin çoğunluğunun mesleğe yönelik olumlu bir algı ve bakış açısına sahip olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Metafor, hemşirelik, hemşirelik algısı, öğrenci

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Introduction

Nursing is a profession that meets the physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual, social, and spiritual needs of individuals with a holistic approach. Nurses provide care-based health services to individuals of all ages, whether they are healthy or sick (Ergün and Güzel, 2016; Ingwu et al., 2016). Although the nursing profession has an important place in the health system, nurses still have difficulties with the image that affects their professional status (Mering and Van Wyk, 2013; Waters, 2005). It is thought that professional image has an impact on the perceptions of people who consider choosing nursing as a profession. According to Emeghebo (2012) the negative perceptions of nurses on their profession adversely affect their interactions with sick and healthy individuals and team members. Nurses' perceptions regarding their profession are effective in choosing nursing as a professional career, maintaining the profession, progressing in the profession, or leaving the profession.

Sharoff (2009) argues that metaphor analysis of nurses' perceptions of their profession is effective in understanding the profession, discovering nurses' insights into their profession, identifying their reflections on their professional practices, and gaining a deep understanding of their professional priorities. Metaphors, which offer the opportunity to examine phenomena from a unique and creative perspective, can be used to evaluate a familiar process from a different perspective, to evoke emotions, and to identify necessary interventions (Carpenter, 2008). It has been observed that there are metaphor studies in the literature focusing on the professional awareness and perspectives of nurses and nursing students (Eriksson et al., 2014; Kale and Çiçek, 2015; Kaya et al., 2013; Özveren et al., 2018; Sharoff, 2013; Yesilbalkan et al., 2021). It can be stated that in these studies the metaphors used by the nurses to reflect their professional perceptions were shaped by their perceptions of the image of the profession at the time and period of the study. A qualitative study on the metaphorical perceptions of nurses about their profession reported that the most frequently used metaphors by the participants were slave, worker, and angel (Kale and Çiçek, 2015). Yeşilbalkan et al. (2021) carried out a study to reveal the metaphorical perceptions of graduate nursing students about their profession and revealed that the metaphors of mother and angel are widely used and the majority of the metaphors used by the

participants indicate a positive perception about the nursing profession.

The use of metaphors to reveal nursing students' perceptions of their profession enables students to think more deeply about themselves, their environment, and nursing (Özden et al., 2013). With metaphors, it may also be possible to improve the experiences and perspectives of students, who will start their professional life, about nursing practices (Ergün and Güzel, 2016; Özveren et al., 2018). Since the tendencies and perceptions of individuals related to their profession affect the quality of health care they provide, studies that reveal these aspects are important (İnce and Khorsid, 2015; Karadağlı, 2016; Lai et al., 2008; Özveren et al., 2018). In addition, when the national literature is reviewed, it is seen that the number of metaphor studies specific to the professional perceptions of nursing students is limited (Kale and Çiçek, 2015; Kaya et al., 2013). In this context, this study aims to unveil the perceptions of freshman nursing students who just started their professional education about their profession with metaphors.

Research Question

The metaphorical analysis of freshman nursing students' perceptions of their profession addresses the following research question.

1) Which metaphors do the freshman nursing students use to reflect their perceptions of the profession?

Method

Design

Qualitative research design was used in this study

Participants and Settings

The study was carried out in the Faculty of Nursing of a university in Central Anatolia in the 2019-2020 academic year. The target population of the study consisted of 94 freshman nursing students. The research was conducted with first-year students who have just started nursing education or who have not received any vocational training. The inclusion criteria were being a freshman nursing student and volunteering to participate in the study. The exclusion criterion was being a health vocational high school graduate. The purposive sampling method was used in the selection of the sample. This method provides an in-depth study of cases that are thought to have rich information, and it is often useful in discovering and explaining facts and situations (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018).

Data Collection Forms

The Personal Information Form (age, gender) prepared by the researchers and the semi-structured interview form created to reveal the metaphor reflecting professional perception were used to collect data. Before the semi-structured interview form was created, studies aiming to reveal metaphors about a subject or concept were examined (Altun and Camadan, 2013; Kale and Çiçek, 2015; Kaya et al., 2013; Özveren et al., 2018). In the semi-structured interview, there is an open-ended question pattern in the form of "A nurse is like because". In studies where metaphors are used as research tools, the structure "like" is used to reveal the connection between metaphor and the source of metaphor, and "because" is used by participants to provide a justification for their metaphors (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018). Thus, the students who agreed to participate in the study were given a semi-structured interview form containing the metaphor question and were asked to write their opinions focusing on a single metaphor. The metaphors handwritten by the students were the main data source of the study.

Data Collection Methods

The data were collected in the classroom environment between October 1, 2019 and October 7, 2019. The Personal Information Form and the semi-structured interview form were distributed to the students by the researcher and they were asked to respond to the questions. The data collection process took about 20-25 minutes.

Data collection was carried out in the institution where two of the researchers work. One of the researchers working at the school where the study was conducted taught a course to the students who participated in the study. The other researcher in the same school had no contact with the students, and the third researcher worked at another school. During the data collection phase of the study, data were collected in the classroom environment by the third researcher who worked in another school in order to prevent bias, to ensure that students did not feel under pressure, and to support volunteerism. During the data collection phase, the students were informed about the aim of the study and it was stated that they were free to participate or not in the study.

Data Analysis

The data were obtained from 94 freshman nursing students who agreed to participate in the study. However, in the data analysis process, the data that were not deemed appropriate because of not revealing the source of the metaphor and not

providing a justification for the metaphor were eliminated by the researchers. As a result, the data obtained from 61 students were analyzed.

Metaphor analysis, one of the qualitative data analysis techniques, was used to analyze the research data. With metaphor analysis, what the students who participated in the research thought and believed was better understood. In this type of analysis, it is easier for the researcher to categorize the data in both data collection and analysis processes. The answers given to the researched topic can be divided into themes in terms of similarity or difference, and comments can be made. However, the answers given to the question "Why?" should be analyzed well (Altun and Camadan, 2013).

Before the metaphor analysis was performed, the studies that used this technique (Altun and Camadan, 2013; Kaya et al., 2013; Özveren et al., 2018) were reviewed. In addition, the first and second authors have studies on metaphor analysis and qualitative design. The analysis and interpretation of the data was carried out in four stages: the naming stage, the elimination and refinement stage, the category development stage, and the validity-reliability stage. In the naming stage, all metaphors used by the participants were noted. A number was assigned to each of the data collection forms. The similarities and differences of each metaphor with other metaphors were analyzed using the content analysis technique in the elimination and refinement stage. The data that did not include any metaphor sources, that did not provide any justification for the metaphor, that included features belonging to more than one category, and that did not contribute to the understanding of the concept of nursing were removed from the study. In the category development stage, the metaphors regarding nursing were examined in terms of their common features. A list of metaphors was created, and each metaphor used by the students was grouped under a theme. Moreover, privacy was observed, and the quotations were written with explanatory abbreviations at the end of the sentences showing the person from whom they were quoted. For example, in the explanatory expression "S1-F," "S1" indicates Student 1 (source person and number), and "F" indicates the Student's gender (e.g., female).

The most important criteria to ensure or increase the reliability of the study findings are validity and reliability. Detailed reporting of the data and an explanation of how the results were obtained are important to ensure validity in a qualitative study. In

the validity and reliability stage, to ensure the validity of the results, (1) The data analysis process was explained in detail, and (2) For each metaphor obtained in the research, a category that was assumed to best represent it was determined. In order to ensure the reliability of the study, the researchers tried to reach a consensus in case of any conflict from the beginning to the end of the study. The first author first coded the data independently. Other authors checked whether the codes were consistent with each other and whether they belonged to a category. Then, the metaphors were categorized and finalized (Altun and Camadan, 2013; Bölükbaş, 2018; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018). In order to increase the reliability of the research, categories and metaphors were prepared in the form of a list. Expert opinion was requested from a researcher who has studies with a qualitative research design and is an expert in psychiatric nursing. The similarity between the expert and the researchers in terms of the coded data set is an indicator of the reliability of the research. This similarity, called internal consistency in the model by Miles and Huberman and conceptualized as inter-rater reliability, was calculated using the formula $\Delta = C \div (C + \partial) \times 100$. In the formula, Δ is the reliability coefficient, C is the number of subjects/terms on which consensus was reached, and ∂ is the number of subjects/terms on which there is no consensus. According to the coding check which gives internal consistency, the consensus among raters is expected to be at least 80% (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha was found to be 92% according to the formula $(37 / (37 + 3)) = 0.92$. To ensure good quality in presenting the study, the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) was used as a guide.

Ethics Committee Approval

Prior to the study, ethics committee approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of a university (dated 25.09.2019: 11/1214). After the ethics committee approval, institutional permission was obtained from the Faculty of Nursing to conduct the study. Confidentiality was protected during the collection and storage of all student information. Codes were used instead of students' real names. Before the interviews, the purpose of the study was explained to the students and their voluntary participation (verbal consent) was ensured.

Results

When the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants were examined, it was seen that the mean age of the students was 19.21 (1.43), 90.2% of the students are female. This section presents the findings related to the metaphors used by the freshman nursing students about their profession. 40 metaphors produced by the participants were grouped under 3 categories and 6 sub-categories based on their common aspects (Table 1).

Category 1: Roles of Nurses

Sub-category 1: Consultant

When this sub-category is examined, it is seen that freshman nursing students perceive nurses as consultants and used metaphors according to this perception. The common feature of these metaphors is that a nurse has been described as a person who has improved herself/himself in many subjects and is a source and teacher for individuals with the knowledge s/he has acquired. The metaphors of "search engine (1)" and "school (1)" under this sub-category were used by two students.

A nurse is like a search engine because, just as we learn about things we do not know by searching on the Internet, patients and their relatives learn about the problems and developments related to the disease by asking the nurse. (S14, F)

A nurse is like a school because s/he provides education for the patient. The patient learns what he does not know or some important information from the nurse. Just as school is a necessary institution for human life, so is a nurse for a sick individual (S50, F)

Sub-category 2: Care Provider/Treatment Provider

Table 1 shows that the students perceive nurses as caregivers and healers and used the following metaphors according to this perception: mother (8), alarm (1), key (1), walking stick (2), babysitter (2), angel (4), straw man (1), handy man (1), Sun (2), street lamp (1), water well in a desert (1), traffic light (1) and bee (1).

A nurse is like a mother because a nurse supports us in every way from the first moment we are born to death, from the first moment we step into the hospital to the moment we leave the hospital. (S9, F)
A nurse is like an angel because s/he cares for the patients with unconditional compassion, provides individual care, and helps and supports them under all circumstances. (S46, F)

A nurse is like the Sun because, just as the Sun gives light to all planets, the nurse lightens up

patients with their treatments and psychological support. (S28, M)

A nurse is like a street lamp because, like a street lamp that illuminates dark streets, the nurse also shows the patient the right way in bad times and allows the patient to see. (S55, F)

Sub-category 3: Communicator and Coordinator

The metaphors in Table 1 under the category of communicator and coordinator show that according to the participants nurses exhibit a cooperative approach, are an important piece of the puzzle, and have an important role in ensuring communication and coordination between patients, their relatives, and doctors. The participants further stated that the order in the hospital environment can not be maintained without nurses and interventions cannot be completed. The metaphors under this category, which are key (1), mother (1), bicycle pedal (1), guitar string (1), door handle (1), tip of a pincer (1),

ink (1), airplane wing (1), building column (4), bridge (1), heart (1), spine (1), and water (1), were used by 16 students.

A nurse is like a guitar string because each string represents a healthcare worker, and when these strings come together, a musical piece emerges. (S27, M)

A nurse is like the column of the building because the building column is the most important element that keeps the building standing. The nurse is the most important factor keeping the health system alive. (S20, M)

A nurse is like a bridge because it is a channel that provides information and communication between the patient and the doctor. (S39, F)

A nurse is like the heart because just as the heart has to beat for us to survive, a nurse is necessary for the health system to continue. Without a nurse, the system collapses. (S30, F)

Table 1. Distribution of the metaphors used by the students regarding nursing profession across thematic categories

Category	Sub-category	Metaphor	# of Metaphor	# of students who used the metaphor
Roles of Nurses	Consultant	Search engine (1), School (1)	2	2 (% 3.3)
	Care provider / Treatment provider	Mother (8), Alarm (1), Key (1), Walking Stick (2), Babysitter (2), Angel (4), Straw man (1), Handyman (1), Sun (2), Street Lamp (1), Water well in a desert (1), Traffic sign (1), Bee (1)	13	26 (%42.6)
	Communicator and Coordinator	Key (1), Mother (1), Bicycle pedal (1), Guitar string (1), Door handle (1), Tip of a pincer (1), Ink (1), Airplane wing (1), Building column (4), Bridge (1), Heart (1), Spine (1), Water (1)	13	16 (%26.2)
Working Conditions of Nurses	Workload	Ant (3), Robot (2), A piece of hair (1), Elastic hair tie (2), Candle (1)	5	9 (% 14.8)
Negative professional image	Decision making	Bride (1), Kite (1)	2	2 (%3.3)
	Worthless	Overlock Machine (1), Laborer (2), Slave (1), Sandbag (1), Cinderella (1)	5	6 (% 9.8)

Category 2: Working Conditions of Nurses**Sub-category 1: Workload**

When this category is examined, it is seen that the metaphors used by the students focus on the excessive workload, intense work pace, and both long and irregular working hours. The common feature of the metaphors under this category is that nurses are worn out, exhausted, and sacrifice themselves due to workload. The metaphors under this sub-category, which are ant (3), robot (2), elastic hair tie (2), candle (1), and a piece of hair (1), were used by 9 students.

A nurse is like an elastic hair tie because the tie, which is initially in good condition, cannot withstand use over time; it loosens and deforms. So is the nurse. (S42, F)

A nurse is like an ant because s/he always works hard without getting tired. Since s/he has too many responsibilities, s/he tries to do more than s/he can handle. (S34, F)

A nurse is like a piece of hair because, just as a piece of hair carries more than its own weight, the nurse also carries the responsibility of many patients all the time (S54, F)

Category 3: Negative Professional Image**Sub-category 1: Decision making**

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the metaphors used are based on the professional limitations and professional decision-making process. The metaphors bride (1) and kite (1) under this category were used by 2 students.

A nurse is like a bride because the nurse does what the doctor says, as the bride does what her mother-in-law says while doing housework and raising her child. (S26, F)

A nurse is like a kite because although the kite is the symbol of freedom, it is also the best example of attachment. Nurses are also dependent on many factors by which they are directed. (S61, F)

Sub-category 2: Worthless

Another sub-category under the category of negative professional image represents the feelings of worthlessness of nurses. The metaphors of laborer (2), slave (1), sandbag (1), Cinderella (1), and overlock machine (1) were used by 6 students.

A nurse is like a slave because s/he works non-stop from morning to night and is subject to negative attitudes in return. (S37, F)

A nurse is like a sandbag because everybody hits him/her. Nobody even says thank you. (S40, F)

A nurse is like an overlock machine because the nurse sees patients and does the things to be done.

When his/her job is over, s/he is always put aside and forgotten. (S52, F)

Discussion

Metaphors can create a cognitive mental image by causing the individual to think more deeply (Altun and Camadan, 2013; Kaya et al., 2013). According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018), grouping the data obtained based on metaphors in terms of similarity and difference facilitates the understanding of metaphors. Understanding how freshman nursing students perceive their profession may contribute to understanding their perspectives on the profession. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the perceptions of freshman nursing students about the nursing profession using metaphorical analysis. In our study, the students used 40 different metaphors to define the concept of nursing, and the metaphors they used were analyzed in three categories and six subcategories. Since the metaphors of "mother and key" used by the students have different analogy aspects, they were discussed under more than one sub-category (caregiver/healer role, communicator and coordinator role). The findings were discussed considering the results of previous quantitative and qualitative research evaluating the perceptions regarding the nursing profession. Our study revealed that the majority of the participants used positive metaphors. Thus, it can be stated that the students who have positive mental images in the professional sense at the beginning of their education life may have a stronger professional image in parallel with their professional knowledge, skills and competencies.

Roles of Nurses

American Nurses Association (ANA) defines nursing as a profession that provides assistance to people and contributes to people's health and well-being (Bonsall and Cheater, 2008). Nursing plays an important role in meeting the health needs of individuals, families, and the society. Nurses perform these duties with roles such as trainer, consultant, caregiver, healer, communicator and coordinator.

In this study, two students stated that they see nurses as a consultant with the metaphors of search engine and school they used. With these metaphors, the participants showed that they perceive nurses as resourceful people and sources of information. One of the roles of nurses is the consultant role. Based on this role, nurses raise the awareness of individuals, families, and the society about health and diseases using resources and accessing scientific

information, with a high level of autonomy (Gedük, 2018). Yesilbalkan et al. (2021) reported in their study with graduate students that the metaphor of "information source" was used by a small number of students and that metaphors related to traditional roles were more common. On the other hand, in their study with first-year nursing students, Özpancar et al. (2008) stated that the majority of students perceive nursing as a profession that is valued in the society. This finding indicates that the positive views of the students who are at the beginning of the courses related to the nursing profession are a reflection of the views of the society.

Our study showed that the students used 24 metaphors related to the caregiver role of nurses, and the metaphors of "mother" and "angel" were the most common ones. Yılmaz and Özbek Güven (2021) reported that nursing students refer to the caregiver role of nurses using the metaphors of "Mother, Soil, Gardener, Spring" and they mostly use the metaphor of mother to explain the caregiver role. Similarly, Eman et al. (2012) conducted a study with 38 nursing students and found that the students defined nurses as caregivers and helpful people. Within the framework of this literature, it is seen that the concept of helping the individual in need of health is at the forefront in the metaphors produced by the students under the caregiver sub-category. In addition, previous studies have also revealed that the metaphor of "mother" is widely used to describe the nursing profession (Dalcalı and Kaya, 2020; Gökdere Çınar, 2019; Özveren et al., 2018). In addition, it is stated that the role of caregiving in the historical process has been associated with the concept of mother and the nursing profession is seen as a continuation of maternal roles and functionality (Hoeve et al., 2014; Holmes, 2012; Kızılcık et al., 2017). This finding indicates that students are aware of the importance of professional care. However, it can be said that students who have deficiencies in terms of professional knowledge, experience and competence mostly explain the role of caregiving with the concept of help.

The nursing students in our study used 13 metaphors related to the role of communicator and coordinator. With these metaphors, the students showed that they perceived the nursing profession as an indispensable element of the health system, positioning it in an important place in providing communication and coordination within the team, and managing patient treatment and care. The strong communication skills of nurses emerge as an important concept in positive professional image. In

other words, effective communication of nurses with the team and the patient/healthy individual can improve both individual and professional image. It can be said that there are different metaphors in the literature regarding the communication and coordination role of nurses; however, the participants interviewed within the scope of the study are aware of the role of the nurses within a team (Kale and Çiçek, 2015; Özveren et al., 2018). Çakıcı (2021) conducted a study with nursing freshman and senior students and revealed that senior students have a higher professional image than freshman students, and students who receive nursing education perceive nurses' communication characteristics better.

Working Conditions of Nurses

Nursing students used metaphors about workload in the category of working conditions. These metaphors specifically emphasize the burnout level of nurses due to irregular working times and intense work pace. Similarly, Yılmaz and Özbek Güven (2021) reported that the nursing students in their study used different metaphors to emphasize the length of working time, irregular working times and intense work pace. On the other hand, quantitative studies highlighted that the workload of nurses is intense due to negative working environments (Kokoroko and Sanda, 2019; Özkan and Uydacı, 2020; Sönmez and Gürler Kısacık, 2020). It can be said that the metaphors used by the nursing students in the workload sub-category and the quantitative data obtained from the nurses working in the field about workload are similar.

Negative Professional Image

Table 2 shows that the students used metaphors regarding negative professional image. Particularly using the metaphors of "bride" and "kite", the participants wanted to emphasize the dependent roles of nurses and their inability to make decisions, which is a reflection of society's perspective on the nursing profession. We can say that freshman nursing students do not have knowledge about the profession and the society in which they grew up have traditional views on the education, roles and duties of nurses, which may have affected their perceptions. Similarly, a qualitative study reported that nurses are restricted in terms of decision making (Glerean et al., 2019). In parallel with this finding, it is thought that the student nurses in our study also expressed that they did not feel independent in making professional decisions with the metaphors of kite and bride. It is believed that increasing the observational skills and situational awareness of

students and supporting students in making decisions about their professional responsibilities can improve their decision-making skills.

Finally, in our study, six students used five metaphors expressing the worthlessness of the nursing profession. When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that metaphors such as laborer, slave and sandbag were produced by nursing students or nurses (Kale and Çiçek, 2015; Yeşilbalkan et al., 2021). With these and similar metaphors, nurses and nursing students perceive both themselves and the profession as worthless and present the negative professional image. A study revealed that nursing students perceived nursing as a profession that is not respected, which supports the findings of this study (Özmen and Çetinkaya, 2016). Only a few negative metaphors were used by the nursing students about the profession and the majority of the metaphors are positive, which suggests that positive professional awareness may be further strengthened as the students improve both in terms of professional knowledge and skills throughout their education life. In addition, the literature emphasizes the importance of developing a positive professional image and promoting the professional socialization process before nursing students graduate (Hendel and Kagan, 2011).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study indicates that the students' perceptions about the nursing profession are predominantly shaped by the roles and working conditions of nurses. It has been shown that students have both positive and negative professional perceptions. The majority of the students used metaphors referring to the caregiver / healer role of the nurse. In addition, it is seen that metaphors are important in discovering nursing students' insights into the profession. These results provide important data to nurse educators in terms of obtaining information about the professional perceptions of students and establishing healthy communication with prospective students, as nursing educators have major responsibilities for students to make decisions, deal with professional difficulties, and become professionals.

Based on these results, it is recommended to increase students' awareness of care duties of nurses as well as other professional roles and responsibilities, to promote their professional socialization, to carry out qualitative and mixed-method studies with different groups and at different universities in order to reveal the mental images of

students in professional sense. In addition, future qualitative and quantitative studies may investigate and compare the professional perceptions of nursing students at all levels.

Study Strengths and Limitations

The strength of the study is that it was conducted with first-year students who have just started nursing education or who have not received any vocational training. These students reflect the point of view of the society. In addition, this study presents important data for the evaluation of the professional perceptions of nursing students who are at the beginning of their professional education, for the improvement of these perceptions throughout their education to increase the quality of nursing care, and for the enhancement of the nursing curriculum for this purpose. On the other hand, not evaluating and comparing the professional perceptions of second, third, and fourth year nursing students through metaphor is one of the limitations of the research. Individuals have different social experiences and cultural backgrounds in defining metaphors and interpreting their basic meanings, and this may cause subjectivity in interpretation (Ritchie, 2013). The creation of metaphors and themes in this study is based on the interpretation of the research team. For this reason, it is thought that researchers' past experiences and individual characteristics may have affected the interpretation of metaphors. Another limitation is that the results of the study cannot be generalized due to the nature of the qualitative study. The research results are only limited to the sample surveyed.

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Ethics Committee Approval: Prior to the study, ethics committee approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of a university (dated 25.09.2019: 11/1214).

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What did the study add to the literature?

- It has been determined that metaphors are important for nursing students to discover their insights into their profession.
- It has been revealed that the majority of nursing students have a positive perception and perspective towards the nursing profession.

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