

Bir Üniversite Hastanesinin Covid-19 Servislerinde Çalışan Hemşirelerin Covid-19 Hemşiresi Olmaya İlişkin Algıları: Bir Metafor Analizi

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Öz

Amaç: Bu çalışmanın amacı, COVID-19 hastalarına bakım veren hemşirelerin COVID-19 hemşireliği ile ilgili düşünce ve algılarını belirlemektir.

Yöntem: Bu araştırma, tanımlayıcı nitel araştırma deseninde yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın evreni Gazi Üniversitesi Sağlık, Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi COVID-19 servislerinde çalışmış ve çalışmakta olan hemşirelerden oluşmuştur. Örneklem, araştırmaya katılmayı kabul eden ve dahil edilme kriterlerini karşılayan 116 hemşireden oluşturulmuştur. Veriler, Hemşire Bilgi Formu ve COVID-19 pandemisi sürecinde hemşire olma metaforu algısı kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Hemşirelerin açık uçlu metafor sorularına verdikleri yanıtlar veri sisteminde içerik analizi kullanılarak sistematik olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırma, Niteliksel Araştırma Raporlama için Konsolide Kriterler Kontrol Listesi'ne uygun olarak yapılandırılmış ve raporlanmıştır.

Bulgular: Hemşirelerin çoğunluğu (%88,2) kadın ve lisans mezunuydu (%85,4). Hemşirelerin yaklaşık yarısı COVID-19 servislerinde 1 ila 5 ay, %40'ı ise meslekte 1 ila 5 yıl çalışmıştır. Hemşirelerin verdikleri yanıtlar sonucunda araştırmada toplam altı kategori ve 89 metafor oluşturulduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu kategoriler ve önemli bazı metaforlar; belirsizlik (köprü, mum), umut (gölge, anne), koruyuculuk (atom), fedakarlık (organ, yapay akciğer), hayati önem (işçi arı, beyaz kan hücreleri) ve savaşı olarak Covid hemşiresi (tüpsüz dalmak, batakılıkta çırpınmak) şeklinde kaydedilmiştir.

Sonuç: Araştırmanın sonuçları hemşirelerin pandemi döneminde kilit bir rol oynadığını göstermiştir. Hemşirelerin genel anlamda bu dönemde umut besledikleri fakat sürecin belirsiz olduğunu düşündükleri gözlenmiştir. Çalışma sonuçlarına dayanarak hemşirelerin psikososyal sağlığının korunmasına ve sürdürülmesine, duygusal desteğin artırılmasına yönelik planlamaların yapılması önerilebilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: COVID-19, algı, hemşire, metafor

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Perceptions Of Nurses Working In The Covid-19 Wards Of A University Hospital On Being A Covid-19 Nurse: A Metaphor Analysis

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of this study is to determine the views and perceptions of nurses, who provide care to COVID-19 patients, on COVID-19 nursing.

Methods: This study was conducted with a descriptive qualitative research design. The population of the study consisted of nurses who had worked and are working in the COVID-19 wards of the Gazi University Health, Research and Application Center. The sample have consisted of 116 nurses who agreed to participate in the study and met the inclusion criteria. The data were collected using a Nurse Information Form and the metaphor perception of being a nurse during the COVID-19 pandemic. The nurses' responses to the open-ended metaphor questions were systematically evaluated in the data system using content analysis. The study was structured and reported in accordance with the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research Checklist.

Results: The majority of nurses (88.2%) were female and had a bachelor's degree (85.4 %). While nearly half of the nurses worked at COVID-19 wards for 1 to 5 months, 40% worked in the profession for 1 to 5 years. As a result of the nurses' answers, it was determined that a total of six categories and 89 metaphors were established in the study. These categories and some important metaphors are listed as uncertainty (bridge, candle), hope (shadow, mother), guardianship (atom), self-sacrifice (organ, artificial lung), vital importance (worker bee, white blood cells), and COVID-19 nurse as a warrior (diving without scuba gear, fluttering in the swamp).

Conclusion: The results of the study revealed that the nurses played a key role during the pandemic period. It was observed that the nurses were generally hopeful during this period, but they thought that the process was uncertain. Based on the results of the study, it can be suggested to make planing to protect and maintain the psychosocial health of nurses, and to increase emotional support.

Keywords: COVID-19, perception, nurse, metaphor

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Introduction

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has spread rapidly all over the world and turned into a pandemic, resulting in numerous deaths and negative impacts on the health systems of the countries. Healthcare professionals, in particular, have been in a critical position for not only providing continuous and safe care to patients and but also taking the pandemic under control. Therefore, nursing care is crucial (Liu et al., 2020a; Liu et al., 2020b). The global prevalence of COVID-19, the increase in the associated mortality and morbidity rates, and failure of usual coping styles have imposed a great burden on healthcare professionals. Nurses endeavored to adapt to a new order by providing uninterruptedly care during this period. However, the unpredictable spreading of COVID-19 has affected community health negatively and has caused significant impacts on the nurses who have witnessed the period closely (Haresh, 2020). Also, the nurses who were working at the forefront during the pandemic had to adapt to a new work environment under these stressful circumstances, resulting in additional difficulties for them. High risk of infection, overwork, frustration, discrimination, isolation, lack of contact with family members, and fatigue, which are prevalent particularly among healthcare professionals, cause health problems such as stress, anxiety, sleeplessness, denial, rage, and fear. These problems may have an indirect effect on healthcare professionals by impairing their attention, comprehension, and decision-making capacity as well as the fight against COVID-19, resulting in a permanent impact on the welfare level of society (Kang, 2020). There are many studies on the COVID-19 pandemic in the literature. However, since COVID-19 is a novel disease and the health systems and cultures of countries vary, there is a need for further qualitative studies on their experiences in order to properly support nurses and gain insight into their experiences (Kaçkın et al., 2020). In this case, metaphors, which are widely recognized as a primary method for revealing abstract thoughts and hard-to-say emotions, attitudes, and beliefs, enable us to reach deep and tangible information and findings. Metaphors allow individuals to figure out how they interpret experiences and events and they are used to name their perceptions of events (Dalcalı & Kaya, 2020). In this regard, the COVID-19 pandemic may be explained with more functional and tangible concepts through metaphors in expressing the meaning and significance of this period. Therefore, the aim of this study is to figure out the views of nurses who provide care for COVID-19 patients about being a COVID-19 nurse, analyze the data using phenomenological methods, and provide basic data for nurses' experiences. It is believed that the study would contribute to the literature.

Methods

Design

This study was conducted based on the descriptive qualitative research design. The qualitative design focuses on phenomena which individuals are aware of but they do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding about (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

Sampling and Participants

The population consisted of nurses who had worked and were working in the COVID-19 wards of the Gazi University Health Research and Application Center (physical therapy isolation, nephrology isolation, and transplantation isolation). The sample consisted of 116 nurses who were working in the COVID-19 wards of the Gazi University Health, Research and Application Center, met the inclusion criteria, and agreed to participate in the study, but the study was completed with 110 nurses after the unexplained and irrelevant metaphors were omitted.

The *inclusion criteria* of the study were determined as follows; being voluntary to participate in the study, having worked or currently working in the COVID-19 wards for at least one month, and providing clinical symptoms, positive tests, or care of patients diagnosed with COVID-19. The participants were included in the study starting from those who were working in the COVID-19 ward for the longest period toward those who were working in this ward for the shortest time. The inclusion process continued until data saturation was reached. The *exclusion criteria* were determined as follows; having chronic physical, neurological, or psychiatric disorders that would prevent the participants from reading and understanding the data collection tools and not taking part directly in one-to-one patient care (such as working as a manager, a trainer, or a coordinator).

Data collection tools

Data were collected using a Nurse Information Form.

Nurse Information Form: The form was prepared online via Google forms based on the literature. It includes a total of 12 questions about the socio-demographic characteristics of nurses (age, gender, marital status, family type, having children, level of education, total duration of employment) as well as their professional characteristics (clinic where they were working, total duration of working in the COVID-19 ward (days), weekly total working hours in the COVID-19 ward) (Marey-Sarvan et al., 2021). For the open-ended metaphor form within the scope of the qualitative study, previous nursing studies were used (Durgun, Köktürk and Bayraktar, 2021; Dalcalı &Kaya, 2020). They were also asked to complete the

sentence “Being a COVID-19 nurse is like..... because.....” in order to determine metaphors about being a COVID-19 nurse throughout the pandemic period in the form. While “like” part of the sentence aims to determine how nurses perceive being a COVID-19 nurse; “because” part aims to express the feelings and thoughts underlying this perception (Işık et al., 2020). For this reason, the nurses were provided with an empty space including the metaphor pattern at the bottom of the form and they were asked to express their thoughts by concentrating on a single metaphor. Nurses were not given a certain time to disclose their metaphorical perceptions. Thus, the nurses expressed their perceptions of being a COVID-19 nurse, as well as their views and emotions underlying this perception.

Data collection

The researchers prepared data collection forms online and delivered them to the participants over Google Forms between September and October 2021, to participate in the study.

Data analysis

The statistical analysis of the study was done using SPSS for Windows, Version 25.0. The interviews were transcribed in a Word file. The data was assessed using descriptive statistics (number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and the content analysis method (for open-ended metaphor questions). The Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative research (COREQ) were used to analyze qualitative data (Tong et al., 2007).

Validity, reliability, and rigour

The data were systematically defined in the data set and grouped using the coding system in content analysis. Similar codes were grouped into categories, and the categories were formed by taking expert opinions. Two of the researchers independently conducted analyses to determine the reliability of data interpretations. The data collection forms, the raw data, the coding to be made during the analysis and all other materials were reserved for confirmability. The study was conducted in five stages using the qualitative data analysis method expressed by Saban (2009).

Coding and sorting: The metaphorical perceptions produced by the nurses, as well as the online data collection form were examined at this stage. The forms completed by the nurses were analyzed to determine whether or not the participants produced a metaphor and a temporary list including the nurses’ perceptions was formed. As a result of the examinations, the metaphors were examined in terms of the subject of each metaphor and the relationship of

the metaphor with COVID-19, and the metaphors that were irrelevant, unexplained or left blank were excluded from the study (n=6).

Compiling a sample metaphor: The researchers examined the temporary list and sorted metaphors on the list in alphabetical order. In the examination, a 'sample metaphor' list was created to represent each metaphor.

Developing categories: Eligible metaphors were examined in terms of subject-grounds. They were categorized according to the message of each metaphor.

Validity and reliability: The metaphors and categories were put into final form by taking the opinion of an expert in order to ensure reliability in the study. The study process and data analysis were thoroughly examined to ensure the validity of the study.

Transferring data into computer environment: In the computer environment, frequency values of the metaphors and categories that were tested for reliability were calculated.

Ethical Considerations

Before beginning the study, ethics committee approval was obtained from the Gazi University Ethics Committee (Date: 11/06/2021 - No: E-77082166-604.01.02-162950), and written permission was obtained from Gazi University Health, Research and Application Center, (Date: 22/09/2021 - No: E-42000842-199-172060). The present study was carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. In the data collection form, the participants were informed about the objective of the study and what the data would be used for. They were also informed that the participation was based on voluntariness, and then their consent was obtained.

Results

The mean age of the nurses was found to be 32.07±6.31. Table 1 shows the socio-demographic and professional characteristics of the participants. 88.2% of the nurses were female, 85.4% had a bachelor's degree, 65.5% were married, 55.5% had children, and 53.6% were living with their spouses and children. In terms of their professional characteristics, 40.0% were working in the profession for 1-5 years and 41.8% had worked or were working in the COVID-19 wards for 1-5 months.

Table 1. Socio-demographic and professional characteristics of the nurses (n=110)

Age (mean±sd)	32.07±6.31	
	n	%
Gender		
Female	97	88.2
Male	13	11.8
Marital Status		
Married	71	64.5
Single	36	32.7
Divorced	3	2.7
Educational Level		
Health Vocational High School	2	1.8
Bachelor's Degree	94	85.4
Master's Degree	14	12.7
Having a Child		
Yes	61	55.5
No	48	43.6
Living with family members		
With mother and father	16	14.5
With either mother or father	4	3.6
With spouse	11	10.0
With spouse and child(ren)	59	53.6
Alone	16	14.5
Other*	4	3.6
Duration of working in the profession		
1-5 years	44	40.0
6-10 years	24	21.8
11-20 years	33	30.0
21-30 years	9	8.2
Duration of working in the COVID-19 wards		
1- 5 months	46	41.8
6- 10 months	32	29.1
11- 20 months	32	29.1

Other* (Siblings, child)

Table 2 shows the metaphors produced by the nurses about being a COVID-19 nurse, as well as the categories derived from these metaphors. The nurses produced a total of 89 eligible metaphors about being a COVID-19 nurse. Metaphors that expressed nurses' perceptions about this matter were divided into six categories after they were examined in terms of common features. These categories were a COVID-19 nurse as someone who touches life - Hope, a COVID-19 nurse as a safe port- Guardianship, a COVID-19 nurse who holds fire - Self-Sacrifice, a COVID-19 nurse as a lifeline - Vital Importance, a COVID-19 nurse as a Warrior, and a COVID-19 nurse who walks toward the unknown - Uncertainty (Table 2)

A COVID-19 nurse as someone who touches life - Hope

When the metaphors produced by the nurses were examined in the study, the first theme appeared as hope. Within the context of this theme, the nurses used 19 metaphors such as “touching life, tree, branch, torch, hold on to life again, etc.” to describe “being a COVID-

19 nurse is like.....”. The common point of the metaphors in the theme of hope was their focus on the fact that nurses became a hope for patients, their relatives, their society, profession and colleagues during the COVID-19 period no matter how uncertain the period was, and they made the period hopeful for everyone. The nurses said:

“It is to show the illuminated route to the patient on the dark road. Because life is indispensable.” (P41)

“It’s like being the cables of the bridge between death and life since no treatment or intervention can be applied properly without us.” (P6)

“It’s like being a tree because it is a hope sprouting in the patient’s soul and body.” (P54)

A COVID-19 nurse as a safe port – Guardianship

When the metaphors used by the nurses were examined, the next theme appeared as guardianship. This theme included six metaphors, such as “mother, soldier, helmet, and shadow,” The theme stressed the guardian trait of the nurses. The nurses expressed:

“A COVID-19 nurse is like a soldier on the battlefield since she is strong and brave enough to sacrifice herself to save the lives of others.” (P18)

“Being a COVID-19 nurse is like a shadow. Because it requires making patients feel as though we always support them.” (P65)

“A COVID-19 nurse is like a helmet for their patients, protecting them from the diseases.” (P1)

A COVID-19 nurse who holds fire - Self-Sacrifice

When the metaphors used by the nurses were examined, the next theme appeared as self-sacrifice. This theme included 8 metaphors such as “holding fire, being isolated from the life, and travelling into dark waters”. The theme referred to nurses’ ability to ignore their own needs and conditions despite everything.

“It is to put someone else’s life ahead of own life. Because making a person live is like making the whole humanity live.” (P31)

“It is like being isolated from the life because you do not want to put your loved ones into jeopardy” (P89)

A COVID-19 nurse as a lifeline - Vital Importance

Another theme used in the present study was vital importance. This theme included 23 metaphors, such as “life, key, oxygen, light switch, clock wheels, and brain.” In this theme, there were statements emphasizing how nurses were important and play a key role during the period. They said the following expressions:

“A COVID-19 nurse is like the wheels of a clock since the clock would not run without them.” (P60)

“It is like the limbs since the nurse enables the patients to access to everything. (P104)

“It’s like being the cables of the bridge between death and life, since, no treatment or intervention can be applied properly without us.” (P6)

A COVID-19 nurse as a Warrior

Warrior was another theme expressed in the present study. There were 15 metaphors under the theme such as “superglue, superhero, worker bee, and white blood cells” This theme included expressions that stressed how nurses had coped with the process and difficulties and emphasized the strength of nurses.

“Being a COVID-19 nurse is like a maroon beret. Because she is able to overcome hardships. (P116)

“A COVID-19 nurse is like a superglue. She glues the patient on the life.” (P71)

“Being a COVID-19 nurse is like a worker bee in a hive because it requires to work hard to keep patients alive in a race against the clock!” (P114)

A COVID-19 nurse who walks toward the unknown - Uncertainty

The last theme in the present study was expressed as uncertainty. The theme included 18 metaphors, such as “to be on the edge of a cliff, dive without a scuba gear, flutter in the marsh, to become stranded on a desert island, etc. “. This theme also included expressions regarding the challenges that they had about not knowing how or when the process would end, or what they would face along the way. The nurses used the following metaphors for this theme:

“It's like the endless winter. Because spring will never arrive.” (P113)

“Being a COVID-19 nurse is like stepping into uncharted territory. Because there’s a war going on, yet neither the weapon nor the cause of the war is known.” (P97)

“Being a COVID-19 nurse is like a tightrope walker because you never know when you’ll lose your balance and fall.” (P78)

Table 2. Nurses' metaphors on COVID-19

Themes	n	%	Metaphors
A COVID-19 nurse who walks toward the unknown - Uncertainty	24	21,81	Emergency room, tree, vaccination, family (4), branch, sun, life, starting life again, touching lives, light, setting light to the patient on the dark road, bridge, holding a torch, candle, the embodiment of struggle, guide, reaching out to someone who is about to fall off a cliff, hope (2), hand/foot/voice (2)
A COVID-19 nurse as someone who touches life - Hope	7	6,37	Mother (2), new mother, soldier, parenthood, helmet, shadow
A COVID-19 nurse as a safe port- Guardianship	8	7,28	Atom, holding fire, being isolated from the life, travelling into dark waters, putting someone else's life ahead of own life, triumph, being dropped off the life, failing to breathe
A COVID-19 nurse who holds fire - Self-Sacrifice	36	32,73	Lung (2), lung branch (2), brain (3), gasoline, the lifeline of a plant, the bicycle pedal, reviving a dried flower, limbs, light switch, life, everything, human hand, heart (3), key, bridge cables, breath (5), breathing, oxygen-free world, oxygen (2), organs, wheels of a clock, water (3), artificial lung.
A COVID-19 nurse as a life line - Vital Importance	17	15,45	Privilege, white blood cells, maroon beret, secret hero, worker bee, somebody who performs her job perfectly, Firefighter, superglue, being a hero, a man of mercy, war, being at war, campaigning, athlete, superhero (3)
A COVID-19 nurse as a Warrior	18	16,36	Fluttering in the marsh, stepping into uncharted territory, and running into uncharted territory, working in vain, gem, becoming stranded on a desert island, tightrope walker, being cursed, miner, orphan, endless winter, rally driver, being both the author and the reader of a novel, wind, taking a shower with cold water, diving without a scuba gear, being on the edge of a cliff, and loneliness.

Note: The figures in parenthesis represent the number of persons who expressed those metaphors.

Discussion

Hope was the first theme derived in this study, which aims to figure out the views of nurses caring for COVID-19 patients about being a COVID-19 nurse. The metaphors in this theme underlined that nurses gave hope to the society about care and profession throughout the period. This perception of hope for nurses is an expected outcome due to global problems, isolated lives, altered social and family dynamics, and, most significantly, the pandemic period, which has put lives of people into jeopardy (Cheng et al., 2021). Hope alleviates burnout among healthcare professionals, raises job satisfaction, and is a positive internal force (Cheng et al., 2021; Hong et al., 2015). In their study, Muz and Yüce reported that nurses had better reflected themselves to the society in a professional sense during the COVID-19 period, their professional maturity increased, their professional perceptions altered, and they had the opportunity to develop their professional skills and relationships. There are studies indicating that hope played a role in reducing negative emotions in people with high hope levels (Cheng

et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2019). The uncertainty of the COVID-19 period and the high mortality rate might have caused the nurses to consciously choose hope as a coping mechanism to preserve their mental health.

The second theme derived from the study was guardianship. The nurses expressed that they displayed interested, meticulous, protective, and monitoring behaviors in all circumstances, especially during patient care, for this theme. This might have caused the patients to witness the inevitability of death induced by COVID-19, regardless of age, comorbidity, and vulnerable group criteria (Arcadi et al., 2020), and to experience death in solitude, without the consolation of their loved ones and almost without sensitivity (Arcadi et al., 2020), and witness death alone, without the comfort of loved ones, and with a lack of emotional sensitivity. The study by Arcadi et al., (2020) included statements that nurses took on family roles when caring for patients, and they become advocates for their patients because of the emotional relationships they build with them. This was attributed to empathizing with the patients' experiences, which causes empathy to turn into compassion (Arcadi et al., 2020). In the literature similar studies have stated that the role of advocacy as a concept includes several components such as developing behaviors to assure and protect the well-being of persons who are cared for and assisting them to receive what they seek most from the health system (Choi et al., 2014). In another study, in addition to providing holistic care, nurses stated that they could meet the patient's needs and concerns and provide the support they sought at all times during their hospital stay (Vazquez-Calatayud et al., 2021). Likewise, the studies have reported that the nurses always put the needs of their patients first and be employed more in challenging circumstances (Aquila et al., 2020; Bookey-Bassett et al., 2020).

The third theme in the study was self-sacrifice. The nurses focused on the patient care and prioritizing their needs in all circumstances beyond their own needs. This data coincides with studies reporting that the nurses struggled to give patients a holistic care by prioritizing patient safety, even though their workload increased during the pandemic period (Fernandez-Castillo et al., 2020). Some studies indicated that the long working hours of nurses, inability to meet their physiological needs (such as eating, resting sufficiently, and using the restroom), heavy workload, ignoring their social lives, and affected family dynamics (living away from home, failing to see their family members) resulted in loneliness, exclusion and stress, while the intensive work reduced their efficiency and strength (Yao et al., 2020). Another study indicated that the nurses continued to provide care and always be prepared,

despite having personal and family health concerns (Schroeder et al., 2020). Therefore, the regulation of working conditions (shift systems, meeting rest and proper nutrition needs, and increasing the number of nurses), living conditions, and social needs of nurses may be important issues that must be addressed.

Another theme in the study was vital importance. In this theme, the nurses stressed that they were a key component of the healthcare system and an essential member of the patient care and treatment team. The studies indicated that other members of the healthcare team reduced the number of patients by assessing their interactions with patients; whereas, nurses maintained direct care services with minimum change (Schroeder et al., 2020). Some studies reported that nurses were concerned that the importance of those working at the forefront during those crises would diminish after such crises ended and their committed efforts would be forgotten, and their needs of visible, respected, and appreciated stood out. Nurses also expressed dissatisfaction at being classified as other health workers throughout this period (Monjazebi et al., 2020; Yıldırım et al., 2021). It is stated that collaboration between professions and organizations should be established in order to provide effective and quality care (Liu et al., 2020). Nurses, vital member of the healthcare team, play a key role in fostering communication and collaboration within the team when undertaking care-based activities; therefore, it is crucial to clarify the roles of team members and to provide social and mental support systems that will reduce the workload.

Another theme used by nurses was the warrior. This theme emphasized the strength of nurses during the period. Nurses were always at the forefront during the period and provided physical and mental assistance to the patient, their relatives, their immediate surroundings, and society in the fight against the disease and its effects. During this period, the declaration of health workers as heroes by the society, social environment, media, institutions and organizations may have contributed to increase their strength. The studies indicated that the community, institutions, and organizations referred to nurses as heroes and warriors among healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic (Felepchuk & Finley, 2020; Kearns, 2020). It is also stated that such war metaphors are often used as powerful political and emotional instruments during epidemics with the uncertain process since they attract persons' attention (Horton, 2020). The studies pointed out that the public declared nurses as heroes and this might lead to both positive and bad outcomes for them. Positive outcomes included establishing a sense of satisfaction, enjoying their profession, and being respected and appreciated professionally; on the other hand, negative outcomes included bearing the burden

of expectations, self-sacrifice, and feeling lonely, helpless, and exhausted during this war (Marey-Sarvan et al, 2021; Monjazebi et al., 2020). In the light of these results, It can be recommended to support nurses receive psychological support in the hospital, give permissions, organize working hours, plan social activities, and use short documentaries, films and social media for nurses for keeping this process in mind in order to increase their coping skills.

Uncertainty was the final theme examined in the study. This theme reflected nurses' concerns about what they will face during this period and whether or not the period will come to an end. This may have led the nurses to face feelings of futility, exhaustion, and burnout due to the unclear process, and the frequent changes in the practices and treatments. The studies have supported this result. It was claimed that the reflections of these uncertain circumstances of nurses on care and treatment resulted in an increase in their workload and hopelessness (Monjazebi et al., 2020; Moradi et al., 2020).

Strengths and limitations

The limitation of the study is that it was conducted at a single center. Studies can be expanded with more than one center. After the data were analyzed in the study, the lack of participant confirmation about the findings is considered a limitation. Given that results of the present study are consistent with those of previous studies, it can be said that they are generalizable.

Conclusion

In this study, the metaphors used by the nurses were analyzed according to the following themes: hope, uncertainty, warrior, self-sacrifice, vital importance, and guardianship. The variety of metaphors also varied based on the experiences of how they perceive and interpret the COVID-19 pandemic. The metaphors were related to the uncertainty of the pandemic period, their key role during this period, and their hope for the period despite everything. Examination of these metaphors revealed that the nurses emphasized their strengths for the pandemic period.

Implication for Nursing Management

This study, which reflects the perceptions of frontline nurses working against COVID-19 regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, revealed that nurses were undecided about the COVID-19 pandemic, but they had perceptions about the fact that nursing gave hope people in care and professional sense during the pandemic period. These results reflect the need for

psychosocial support for nurses to be strong during the pandemic period. As a guide to nurse managers, it is emphasized that the trainings to be planned should be multi-dimensional. Finally, the fact that nurses are still exhausted in all aspects, aside from standing strong during the COVID-19 pandemic and their warrior aspect, emphasizes the importance of creating an effective mental health support plan.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

No conflict of interest has been declared by the researchers

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