

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Student Nurses' Perceptions of the Concept of Blended Education: Metaphor Analysis Study

Öğrenci Hemşirelerin Karma Eğitimi Kavramına Yönelik Algıları: Metafor Analizi Çalışması

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of nursing students regarding the concept of "Blended Education", which was implemented for the first time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, through metaphors.

Methods: The study, nursing students receiving undergraduate nursing theoretical education online and clinical practices face-to-face during the pandemic were determined as the criterion. The study was conducted in the phenomenology approach pattern, forming the basis of qualitative research. The universe and sample of the study consisted of 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year nursing students (n=593, n=331) studying at the Faculty of Nursing in the 2021-2022 academic year. The research data were collected face-to-face between March 1 and April 30, 2022, using the "Metaphorical Perceptions Data Collection" tool. Content analysis based on metaphor analysis was used in data analysis. Data analysis was carried out in five stages.

Results: Data analysis was carried out in five stages. Student nurses created 160 metaphors for the concept of blended education. The obtained metaphors were examined in terms of similarities and combined under two categories as "Academic dimension" and "Psychosocial dimension". The metaphors frequently employed in student narratives, such as "a nightmare" and "a severe illness," reveal the psychological burden and negative experiences associated with hybrid education. Conversely, metaphors like "incomplete knowledge," "a foundationless building," and "an unfinished painting" highlight the perceived deficiencies in academic processes arising from hybrid education.

Conclusions: In line with this result, it is of great importance to integrate empowering educational content into the curriculum to eliminate students' academic and psychosocial concerns. In addition, it is recommended that various courses be organized and universities' technical infrastructures be strengthened to increase the competencies of academics.

Keywords: Metaphor analysis, phenomenology, qualitative research

ÖZ

Amaç: Bu çalışmanın amacı, hemşirelik öğrencilerinin "Karma Eğitim" kavramına ilişkin algılarını metaforlar aracılığıyla belirlemektir.

Gereç ve Yöntemler: Çalışma, nitel araştırmanın temelini oluşturan fenomenoloji (olgubilim) yaklaşımı deseniyle yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın evren ve örnekleme, 2021-2022 eğitim-öğretim yılında Hemşirelik Fakültesi'nde eğitim gören 2., 3. ve 4. sınıf hemşirelik öğrencilerinden (N=593, n=331) oluşmuştur. Araştırma verileri 1 Mart-30 Nisan 2022 tarihleri arasında "Metaforik Algılar Veri Toplama" aracı kullanılarak yüz yüze görüşülerek toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde metafor analizine dayalı içerik analizi kullanılmış olup analiz beş aşamada gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Bulgular: Öğrenci hemşireler karma eğitim kavramına yönelik 160 metafor oluşturmuşlardır. Elde edilen metaforlar benzerlikleri yönünden incelenmiş ve "Akademik boyut" ile "Psikososyal boyut" olmak üzere iki kategori altında birleştirilmiştir. Öğrenci ifadelerinde sıklıkla başvurulmuş "kabus" ve "kötü bir hastalık" metaforları, karma eğitimin öğrenciler üzerindeki psikolojik yükünü ve olumsuz deneyimlerini ortaya koymaktadır. Buna karşılık "eksik bilgi", "temelsiz bina" ve "yarım kalmış tablo" gibi metaforlar ise karma eğitimin akademik süreçlerde yarattığı algılanan eksiklikleri ifade etmektedir.

Sonuçlar: Sonuç olarak, öğrenci hemşirelerin karma eğitim kavramına ilişkin metaforların akademik ve psikososyal boyutta olduğu görülmektedir. Bu sonuçlar doğrultusunda, akademik öğreniminin sağlıklı olması ve kaliteli eğitim oluşturulmasında akademisyenler için çeşitli kursların oluşturulması ve öğrencilerin akademik ve Psikososyal kaygılarına yönelik güçlendirici eğitim içeriklerinin müfredata eklenmesi önerilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fenomenoloji, metafor analizi, nitel araştırma

INTRODUCTION

Following the first identification of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the highly contagious COVID-19 disease a pandemic as of March 2020 (1). According to the statement made by the Ministry of Health on March 11, 2020, the first case of this disease, which has affected the whole world, has been detected in our country (2). The pandemic has affected every aspect of individual and social life, and all stages of education have been directly affected (3). In order to reduce the possibility of human-to-human transmission of COVID-19, many restrictions have been imposed on areas where people interact closely, including educational institutions. Accordingly, face-to-face education in schools has been stopped in many parts of the world, and a distance education model has been adopted to ensure continuity of education (4). Similarly, decisions have been made at the national level in the education sector in our country, and face-to-face education has been suspended at all levels of education.

The Council of Higher Education (CHE) announced that education and training at universities have been temporarily suspended as of March 16, 2020 (5), and the distance education process has also been on the agenda in our country (6,7). In nursing education, the blended learning model has been adopted as of February 17, 2021, with the statement that "face-to-face education can be provided with utmost care and strict measures in practical training, but theoretical training should continue using distance

education methods." (8). Blended learning is an innovative educational model that combines traditional face-to-face education with online learning (9,10). In this context, determining the experiences of university students who are the addressees of blended education regarding this process is of great importance. Although the number of studies addressing the perception of blended education with a quantitative research paradigm is high, there are also studies conducted using a qualitative research paradigm through metaphors (11,12).

In extraordinary situations such as pandemics, the use of blended education methods in education and training processes should be addressed multidimensionally and examined comprehensively in terms of student education and educator development, both nationally and globally (4, 9). Metaphors are linguistic tools that provide the expression of our consciousness regarding a social phenomenon (12). Thanks to metaphors, individuals can easily reveal a missing, inadequate, or hidden problem, and it can be understood and explained more easily, and metaphors can help to derive in-depth meaning about an event or situation (6). There are also different studies conducted through metaphor regarding the education of university students (13,14).

Among the studies examined, it can be said that the study is the first since there is no study evaluating the metaphorical perceptions of student nurses regarding blended education. In this context, the

study aims to reveal the metaphors of nursing students regarding the concept of blended education and thus to identify the positive and negative situations experienced in the blended education process and to provide quality data to researchers, administrators, and education policymakers. The aim of the study is to determine the perceptions of student nurses regarding the concept of blended education during the Covid 19 pandemic period with the help of metaphors and to answer the following questions in line with this purpose.

1. What are the metaphorical perceptions of nursing students regarding the concept of blended education during the COVID-19 pandemic period?
2. Under which conceptual categories can the metaphors created (produced) regarding the concept of blended education be grouped according to their similarities and differences?

MATERIALS and METHODS

Study Design

This research was conducted in the phenomenology approach pattern, forming the basis of qualitative research. Phenomenology research is defined as focusing on phenomena that are aware of but do not have a detailed and in-depth understanding (14). The phenomenology pattern aims to produce information and reveal the reality of a phenomenon. This pattern mostly tries to understand the inner world of people and their consciousness structures (15). In

addition, metaphor analysis, an effective method in the in-depth investigation of complex concepts, events, and phenomena, is seen as an important qualitative research method, and the metaphor analysis method, suitable for the purpose of the research, was used in this study. While phenomenology aims to reveal participants' life experiences and the meanings they attribute to these experiences, metaphor analysis is used as a powerful tool to enrich these meanings (14,15).

The phenomenon studied within the scope of the research predicted the experiences, impressions, and perceptions of nursing students in the clinical field with the transition to face-to-face education after online education, and their experiences in performing clinical skills after online education. The research was conducted with nursing students (2nd, 3rd, and 4th years) continuing their education at Selcuk University Faculty of Nursing. In the process of obtaining the research data, after obtaining the necessary permissions from the institution, the data were collected face-to-face at a convenient time outside the students' class hours between March 1 and April 30, 2022. This date was chosen because it coincides with the spring semester, and it was observed that both face-to-face education and online education activities were carried out in a balanced manner during this period.

Participants

In this case investigated within the scope of the research, the experiences, impressions, and perceptions of nursing

students in online education in theoretical courses and face-to-face education in clinical practices are predicted. In the data collection process of the research, all nursing students experiencing the process were used. The universe of the research consists of 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year nursing students (N=593) receiving their theoretical education online and clinical practice education face-to-face during the pandemic period in the 2021-2022 academic year. The aim was to reach the entire universe without making a sampling calculation, and the study was completed with 331 students filling out the data collection form completely. The aim was to reach the entire universe without making a sampling calculation, and the study was completed with 331 students (Participation rate 55%) filling out the data collection form completely. The easily accessible situation (convenient sampling) sampling technique, a sampling technique in which both proximity and easy-to-access situations are selected and is among the purposeful sampling techniques, was used in the research. This technique was also preferred because it provides speed and practicality to the research (16).

Data Collection

In collecting the data, the "Metaphorical Perception Data Collection Tool" prepared by the researchers in line with the literature (17,18) was used. The data collection tool consists of two parts. In the first part, there are three questions to determine the personal information of the students (gender, class, marital status). In the second part, a metaphor was defined

to reveal the students' perceptions of blended education, exemplified with an example, and the question "If you were to compare the concept of blended education to a metaphor (concept), what would you compare it to?" was asked and they were asked to fill in the blanks in the sentences "Blended education is like Because" The students were given a metaphorical perception data collection tool and asked to create a metaphor about their thoughts on the concept of blended education.

Statistical Analysis

The quantitative data analyses of the study were summarized as percentages (%) and frequency (f) using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows, version 25.0 package program. In the analysis of qualitative data, content analysis based on metaphor analysis was used. The analyses were conducted independently by each researcher using the data reduction method, and then the final version of the analyses was obtained by combining the results. The analysis and interpretation of the metaphors developed by the students regarding the concept of blended education was carried out in five stages with the qualitative data analysis method, referred to as "Metaphor Analysis" among the qualitative data analysis types in the international literature, is associated with content analysis and was expressed by Saban (2009) in our country (19,20). These stages are as follows: Coding and extraction process (I), Sample metaphor image editing process (II), Category development process (III), Validity and

reliability ensuring process (IV), and Data transfer process (V). The study analysis was turned into a report. During the coding and sorting process, data collection tools were examined, and the resulting metaphors were listed. Metaphors were coded at this stage, and forms containing missing or non-metaphorical expressions (n=171) were removed from the analysis. In the sample metaphor image editing process, the metaphors created were arranged in alphabetical order, and a list of sample metaphors representing each metaphor was created. In the category development stage, valid metaphors were evaluated in terms of their similarities, and each metaphor was divided into categories according to its similar characteristics related to blended education. The process of ensuring validity and reliability was explained in detail by analyzing all data and asking for expert opinions from three faculty members. In the data analysis, a sample metaphor image was created, the created metaphor was stated in the findings, and participant student statements were included. The process of transferring data to the computer environment was completed under the standards for reporting qualitative research (SRQR) guidelines (21).

Ethical Consideration

Before starting the research process, written permission (Date: 02/02/2022, and number: 2021-10) was obtained from the Non-Interventional Ethics Committee of the Nursing Faculty at Selcuk University, and institutional permission was obtained from the Dean of Selcuk Faculty of Nursing,

where the research would be conducted. The purpose of the research was explained to the students agreeing to participate in the research, and their verbal and written consents were obtained. This research was carried out in full compliance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, as established by the World Medical Association (WMA).

RESULTS

A total of 331 participants completed the online data collection form. 27 participants left the metaphor part unanswered. 196 participants produced metaphors, and 108 participants only expressed their opinions and did not produce metaphors. Of the 196 participants producing metaphors, 36 metaphors and their explanations were excluded from the study because they were unrelated. More than half of the 160 participants (78.1%) are female students. Approximately half of the participants (49%) were 2nd graders, 30.6% were 3rd graders, and 20.4% were 4th graders. The participants producing the metaphor will be denoted with "P", and the number next to it is the number of times the participant took the survey form. The metaphors produced by the participants regarding blended education were gathered around two main themes: the academic and the psychosocial dimension (Table 2). Under the metaphor theme of the academic dimension, sub-themes of lack of knowledge and skills (n=42) and attending class because it is mandatory (n=8) were created (Table 1).

Table 1: Metaphors and frequencies produced by students regarding academic and sub-themes related to education

Themes	Sub-Themes	n	%	Metaphors
Academic dimension	Lack of knowledge and skills	42	26.2	Learning a religion by looking at people practicing that religion (1), education is only black and white in the rainbow (1), incomplete knowledge (1), hyperopia (1), sugar (2), taking a distance course (1), being disabled (1), learning to play an instrument remotely (1), watching the summary of a TV series you haven't watched (1), a Ramadan dinner without pita (1), a building without a foundation (1), an unfinished painting (1), a book with missing pages (1), a pond (1), running out of turnips next to the lahmacun (1), zero inert element (1), a balloon filled with air (1), a cracked glass (1), owning a car without a license (1), a poor quality perfume (1), a filter (1), garbage (1), wood on the water (1), drinking soup with a fork (1), spending an unproductive weekend (1), not understanding why you came to the kitchen and returning to your room (1), stunt actor (1), video chat (1), water cactus forgotten to be given (1), rescue attempt (1), drinking water from an empty glass (1), rowing in vain (1), wasted hours at home (1), struggling around the room (1), playing doctor (1), shadow (1), child loved with gloves (1), a child playing football without shoes (1), preparing a soldier for war without a sword (1), making someone knowing how to play football play volleyball (1), walking on the road with a disability (1).
	Attending class because it is mandatory	8	5	A task you have to do (1), a friend you don't like with whom you have to be in the same environment (2), a farmer leaving his land fallow (1), having to eat food you don't like (2), reading a book you don't enjoy reading (2).

The sub-theme that produces the most metaphors is the lack of knowledge and skills. One participant used the “sugar” metaphor (n=2), which is the most used in this sub-theme, as follows:

Having online education during the COVID-19 pandemic is like candy. Because it was nice not to have school and exams at the beginning of the pandemic, but later we realized that missing this education caused great deficiencies and harm in our lives.” P.124

The “hypermetropia” metaphor (n=1) in the same sub-theme group is expressed as follows:

“It is like hyperopia, it looks beautiful from a distance, but when you look at it closely, it is blurred and incomplete, because only theoretical knowledge is not enough, it is also necessary to apply it.”

The metaphor of “a poor quality perfume” (n=1) is stated as follows:

“It's like applying poor quality perfume because it feels good at the moment, but it fades away without application.” P.23

The metaphor of “playing doctor” (n=1) was expressed as follows:

“..it's like playing doctor as a child. You vaccinate the toys and examine them; they are your mute patients.” P.48

In the obligation sub-theme, the metaphor of “The friend you dislike and have to be in the same environment with” (n=2) was expressed as follows:

“He is like a friend around me that I don't like. Because you don't want to be together, but you don't have many options to send it away, you have to endure it.” P.105

The psychosocial dimension theme consists of the sub-themes of disappointment, indecision, satisfaction, pessimism, frightening, depressive, despair, complexity, longing, and oppression (Table 2).

Table 2: Metaphors and frequencies produced by students regarding the themes and sub-themes of the psychosocial dimension regarding co-education

Themes	Sub-Themes	n	%	Metaphors
Psychosocial Dimension	Disappointment	20	12.5	A child whose toy was taken away from him (1), going to a show you loved and not like it (1), a knock on the door in the middle of your favorite book (1), the seed you planted not growing (1), making it to the end of your favorite show (1), the football team not becoming a champion (1), a salty dessert (5), unsweetened tea (1), buttermilk that has not been fully shaken (1), a rose with thorns (1), an unripe fruit (1), baklava without spilled syrup (1), a car waiting for repair (1), tasteless lahmacun (1), tasteless food (1), candy given to the baby (1)
	Indecision	19	11.8	Good and bad like a lover (1), Falling snow is beautiful but you get cold (1), The picture of indecision (1), Picking a sweet fruit from a high tree (1), cloudy sunny weather (5), opportunity and punishment (1), blurry (1), walking on an unknown path (4), uncertainty (1), sour face chewing gum (1), Jerry character in the Tom and Jerry cartoon (1), Wanting to go down in the elevator going up (1).
	Satisfaction	12	7.5	Dream (1), something beautiful (1), a beautiful dream (3), never-ending chocolate (1), living life beautifully (1), ship rescue on a deserted island (1), seeing a water mirage in the desert (1), snow holiday (1), keeping up with the new generation (1), a light and fat-free diet (1).
	Pessimism	9	5.6	Not being able to see the light at the end of the tunnel (1), a blind well (1), closed weather (3), never-ending snowy weather (1), a bitter life (1), a bad friend (1), being paralyzed (1).
	Frightening	17	10.6	Nightmare (2), a bad disease (2), a sick child (1), a scary movie (1), a bad movie (1), nightmare (2), torture (3) staying in a dark room for months (1), life sentence (1), being stranded (1), prison (1), prisoner (1).
	Depressive	9	5.6	A small room where you are locked (1), a book written in a fluent language but whose ending I wonder about (1), boring like food (1), closed air (5), a philosopher (1).
	Despair	8	5	Being left without an umbrella in the rain (1), being in the middle of the sea in a storm (1), falling into the void (1), trying to fish in a dry lake (1), climbing uphill, (1) eating pasta with dry bread (1), running a ship on land (1), Walking on a thorny path (1)
	Complexity	12	7.5	Complicated rope (1), Ferris wheel (1), looking at a metal spoon and seeing it upside down (1), salad (1), soup (5), complicated (1), night (1), randomly pressing all the buttons (1).
	Longing	2	1.2	An expatriate misses their homeland (1), cartoon (1).
	Oppression	2	1.2	Race (1), marathon (1).

The most repeated metaphors in the disappointment sub-theme are the metaphor of “a salty dessert” (n=5).

“...education was like a salty dessert because it was very nice to start education face to face again, I missed it very much, but online education was like the salt of this beautiful dessert, it made the education

that could have been nice, inefficient and tasteless.” P.3

The metaphor of “the child whose toy was taken away from him” (n=1) is stated as follows:

“It is like the unhappiness of a child whose toy has been taken away from him, for students who have spent a long time

wondering when we will switch to face-to-face education and who have struggled to study at university for a long time due to the disappointment of not being able to benefit from the opportunities offered for applied courses in the past years.” P.160

The metaphor of “cloudy sunny weather” (n=5) in the sub-theme of indecision was frequently repeated.

“It is like cloudy and sunny overcast weather. Because, on the one hand, you feel sad and don’t want to go out and wish you would stay in bed all day, but on the other hand, there is a strange peace in it that evokes cleanliness and purification.” P.30

“Walking on an unknown path” was the other most frequently repeated metaphor (n=4). The participant expressed his statement as follows:

“... is like the main street of a city you don’t know at all. It’s like walking on an unknown path. Because, just as you do not know what to do in the city or which direction to go, it becomes challenging to adapt to education conditions during the pandemic and find the traces on a path that leads to chaotic and uncertain places.” P.42

Some metaphors in the sub-theme of Indecision are expressed as follows:

“It is like picking fruit from a very high tree but being afraid of losing control and falling, because the fruit of education in a pandemic is a sweet but risky situation.” P.106

“...It’s like in the Tom and Jerry cartoon, where everyone first finds Tom guilty and later realizes that Tom is innocent and that Jerry is the one making a mess because, although we thought that online education was very bad, it had advantages for us

(except for our practice lessons).” P.127

A participant (n=3) expressed the most frequently repeated “beautiful dream” metaphor in the satisfaction sub-theme as follows:

“I think blended education is like a beautiful dream because having some courses through a remote system allows us to study at home again and again.” P. 110

Another participant expressed the metaphor of “light and fat-free diet” as follows:

“... Co-education is very suitable. It is like a light and fat-free diet. Because it provides us with adequate education and guarantees the maximum possible prevention.”

A participant (n=3) expressed the “closed air” metaphor in the pessimism sub-theme as follows:

“It’s like indoor air. “When the weather is bad, we become pessimistic and want the sun to shine as soon as possible.” P.35

In the frightening sub-theme, the metaphor of “nightmare, nightmare, torture, a bad disease”, which was repeated more than once, emerged. Examples are expressed as follows:

“It’s like a nightmare because I live in a dormitory and I don’t have a computer, I can’t attend live classes, and to attend, I have to come to the library on the nearest campus, and this makes me very tired.” P. 56

“It was like a complete nightmare. I could neither understand the lessons nor the high grades I received reflected my true level of knowledge.” P.28

“Education during the COVID-19 pandemic is like torture. Because if there is no internet

connection where you are, attending classes will be a pain.” P.200

“It’s like a bad disease, it’s scary because when you get sick, you can’t do anything, you have to get better, and we need to get better in this process.” P.123

The closed air metaphor (n=5) in the depressive sub-theme was used as follows:

“It oppresses me like closed air.” P.30

The “philosopher” metaphor produced here is expressed as follows:

“Distance education made me philosophical because it made me lonely. It is as if I am about to reach Nietzsche’s superior man. “My communication with people has decreased.” P.4

In the despair sub-theme, the metaphor of “being left without an umbrella in the rain” is stated as follows:

“It’s like looking under the roof when you don’t have an umbrella in the rain. Because you get wet, you can’t move forward, you just want the rain to stop and continue on your way; unfortunately, you can’t do that, so you just stand idle.” P.90

The “Soup” metaphor (n=5) in the complexity sub-theme is the most frequently repeated metaphor. They expressed it as follows:

“It’s like a soup. Because there is a huge difference between the efficiency I get and the effort I have to give. And an education system that reveals extreme class problems.” P.1

“Education in the Covid-19 pandemic is like soup. Although face-to-face and online education may seem easy due to the pandemic, they have become very complicated. “The lessons are not easy anyway, we are in a difficult period.” P.18

“It’s like soup, you don’t know when class will be, everything is so complicated.” P.19

When the metaphor of “an expat’s longing for his/her hometown” is included in the sub-theme of longing, the following expression is included:

“... it is like an expatriate missing his country. Because just like expats miss us, we miss the days when we used to go to school comfortably.” P.85

In the oppression sub-theme, the metaphor was produced as follows:

“...it’s like a marathon. Because catching up with online education after face-to-face education can be challenging if you make a planning mistake, and it also makes it difficult to adapt to social life. But the biggest thing is that he puts pressure on.” P.115

DISCUSSION

This study investigated nursing students’ metaphorical perceptions of blended learning across academic and psychosocial dimensions. The majority of the metaphors that students produced from their experiences about their academic lives were negative. Within this category, they think that students will lack the most knowledge and skills related to this education method. Similarly, studies in the literature indicate that the subject that nursing students think will be lacking in distance education during the pandemic period is application skills (22,23,24). The reason for this is the low quality of application education received remotely (25). In a study, nursing students stated that their experiences with patients directly rather than online practices were more valuable (26).

Therefore, it was stated in a study that additional support should be provided to students, and that students taking theoretical courses remotely and practical courses face-to-face also thought that their knowledge and skills were lacking, and that this could be due to the lack of experience resulting from limited interaction with patients and nurses (27). Benner (1984) applied the skill acquisition model to nursing practices and defined the stages of learning and skill acquisition of nurses throughout their careers (28). The five stages of the path from novice to expert are novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. In short, experience is a prerequisite for becoming an expert. Another perspective is that when the students participating in the study started nursing school, some could not even spend enough social time to get to know their classmates because schools were closed due to the pandemic. It is reported that planned socialization of nursing undergraduate students outside of practice will positively affect their professional development (29). Limited opportunities for patients and students to interact with each other may have also affected knowledge and skill acquisition.

Another theme produced by students in this study related to blended education was related to their psychosocial status. The majority of the metaphors produced by students were negative. The literature draws attention to the stress, loneliness, frustration, pressure, and anxiety experienced by nursing students during the COVID-19 pandemic (23,26). In studies, students describe loneliness as an 'incredibly isolating experience' lacking connection and support mechanisms (30,31). A meta-analysis found that

students felt overwhelmed due to poorer clinical preparation and uncertainty about future career prospects (32). The similar feelings seen in this study suggest that the impact of what students experienced during the distance education process is still ongoing. A study conducted with a blended education system showed that the disadvantages of distance learning in nursing students could be compensated with additional assistance (33). However, our study showed that the negative effects of distance education could not be compensated for with a blended education system in the short term.

In addition to all these, the negative emotions experienced by students concerning each other affect not only their psychological effects but also their learning performance (34). It can be said that the academic anxiety experienced by students due to the pandemic negatively affected their academic success and, accordingly, their psychology. Even before the pandemic, nursing faculty often struggled to manage time efficiently, given the comprehensiveness of the health curriculum (35). This, combined with the short preparation time provided, may have continued to negatively affect the psychosocial aspects of students, especially the long and difficult theoretical courses delivered via distance education.

In this study, some of the students stated that they were satisfied with blended education. Similar results were presented where students showed a positive perception in terms of their attitude towards blended learning and agreed on the usefulness of their courses (36,37).

In general, this study has shown that blended education applied to students reflects positive and negative aspects on academic and psychosocial dimensions. However, the study has some limitations. First, this study was conducted in a state university; therefore, the generalization of the findings is limited because the learning characteristics of the students may be affected. Second, the difference in the academic planning of the nursing faculty of this university limits the generalization of the findings. Despite the limitations, the findings of this study can be used because they provide information about the students' perceptions of blended education.

In order for students to be satisfied with the method, an instant feedback mechanism can be added to the curriculum with many different modules. So that students can benefit from it in the best way. Educators can use this data and apply various learning strategies to improve knowledge. This study highlights the idea of developing a more effective blended education to promote the academic success of nursing students after the COVID-19 pandemic. Although a large portion of students conducted theoretical courses via distance education and clinical practices face-to-face with patients in the hospital, they strongly emphasized that they could not overcome their knowledge and skill deficiencies. Students exposed to online education for a long time during the pandemic period generally had negative psychosocial conditions even when they switched to blended education. As various disaster situations and conditions change, and similar pandemics such as COVID-19 restrictions come and go, it is of great importance for educators to evaluate how they convey their messages to their students.

Study Limitations

A potential limitation of this study is the participation rate of 55%. Although this rate affects the representativeness of the data to some extent, the number of participants (n=331) is expected to provide sufficient depth for metaphor analysis. This study focused on the metaphorical perceptions of blended education during a specific period of the COVID-19 pandemic (data collected between March and April 2022). The rapidly evolving nature of the pandemic and subsequent changes in educational delivery methods might mean that the students' perceptions could have shifted over time.

CONCLUSION

Various courses should be organized for academics to provide both face-to-face and online courses in nursing education, and create quality education, and the technical infrastructures of universities should definitely be supported in this regard. In addition, it is strongly recommended that empowering educational content targeting the academic and psychosocial concerns experienced by students be added to the curriculum. These recommendations are of critical importance for improving the quality of education and increasing student success.

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