



Research article

Perceptions of third and fourth year nursing students enrolled in a pediatric nursing course regarding the concept of child abuse: A metaphorical study

Fatma D. Turan ^{a,*}, S. Söyünmez ^b

^a Aksaray University, Faculty of Health Science, Pediatric Nursing Department, Aksaray, Turkey

^b Kirsehir Ahi Evran University, Faculty of Health Science, Pediatric Nursing Department, Kirsehir, Turkey



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Child abuse
Metaphor
Nurse
Student
Student nurse

ABSTRACT

Background: Child abuse is an important public health problem as it negatively affects the child's development as well as the child's family and therefore society. Nurses are one of the most important members of the team caring for child abuse victims and are indispensable in terms of child and family education.

Objectives: The research was carried out to determine the perceptions of third and fourth year nursing students, who took the Child Health and Diseases Nursing course, about child abuse through metaphor.

Design: The research was carried out with the metaphor analysis technique based on the phenomenological method. "Metaphor analysis" is a technique based on the phenomenological research method within the qualitative research methods.

Settings: The study was conducted at a state university in Turkey.

Participants: While the population of the research consisted of nursing department students in a facility, the sample consisted of third and fourth year nursing students who took the Child Health and Diseases Nursing Course. In the study in which 186 nursing students volunteered to participate, the study was completed with 174 students, since the answers of 12 students did not contain metaphors. 174 students who took the course participated in the research.

Methods: The data were collected using the Student Information Form and the metaphor sentence "Child abuse is like ... because..." questioning the perceptions of child abuse from June to August 2021.

Results: At the time of the research, it was determined that all third and fourth year nursing students who took the Child Health and Diseases Nursing course in the institution had negative metaphors about "child abuse". The harm caused by child abuse to the child and the future has often been compared to natural disasters and catastrophes. Metaphors produced for the perception of "Child Abuse"; it is grouped under a total of five categories: Disaster, Damage, Never Beginning, Never Been Like Before, and Hunting.

Conclusions: Child abuse is a medical, pediatric and public health problem that must be reported. Nursing students' perceptions of the subject are very important, as it is among the duties, responsibilities and roles of nurses. The fact that child abuse is perceived by student nurses as the strong hurting the weak, the irreversible harm, or the fact that something good ends before it begins, reveals the importance of the situation. It clearly reflects the necessity of a course on child abuse in the nursing curriculum.

Tweetable abstract: It is important to evaluate the perceptions of child abuse of nursing undergraduate students. @dilek_fatos.

1. Introduction

Child abuse is an important public health problem as it negatively affects the child's development as well as the child's family and therefore society (Akgül et al., 2021; Aktay, 2020; Atencion et al., 2019; Fraser et al., 2010; Jin et al., 2017). The World Health Organization (WHO)

defines child abuse as "exposure of a child to all kinds of attitudes and behaviors that may cause physical, emotional, or sexual neglect and/or neglect that adversely affects healthy growth and development" (WHO, 2019). The WHO reported that 23% of children worldwide are physically abused, 36% are emotionally abused, and 18% of girls and 8% of boys are sexually abused. A child abuse report in Turkey stated

* Corresponding author at: Aksaray University, Faculty of Health Science, Pediatric Nursing Department, Zip Code: 68100 Aksaray, Turkey.

E-mail address: Fatmadilek_32@hotmail.com (F.D. Turan).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2022.105359>

Received 2 December 2021; Received in revised form 16 March 2022; Accepted 1 April 2022

Available online 5 April 2022

0260-6917/© 2022 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

that the number of victims was 74,064 in 2014; however, this number increased to 83,552 in 2016, and the rate of child sexual abuse victims generally increased by 33% (Aslan and Erkol, 2021; Türkkan et al., 2021).

2. Background

Nurses are one of the most important members of the team caring for child abuse victims and are indispensable in terms of child and family education (Akgül et al., 2021; Kurtuncu et al., 2015; Taylor and Harris, 2018; Tweedlie and Vincent, 2019). One study stated that nurses are the most ideal clinical guides in teaching children about sexual abuse prevention (Ceccucci, 2018). In another study, only the mothers were trained for protecting their child from sexual abuse in one group and the children in the other group were physically trained to protect themselves from abuse only by the nurse. It was determined that the training provided to the children by the nurse was more effective than that provided to the mothers (Orak and Okanlı, 2015). Although there are countries in which nurse-centered child abuse education is compulsory in school curricula or hospitals, such education is unfortunately not compulsory in health and education curricula in Turkey (Kurtuncu et al., 2015). Child abuse can be prevented by education (Akgül et al., 2021; Alabay, 2020; Aslan and Erkol, 2021; Bozkurt and Bağ, 2021; Derebağçe and Özerk, 2021; Eken, 2021; Eslek and Yılmaz Irmak, 2022; Evgin and Sümen, 2021; Fraser et al., 2010; Kaplan et al., 2020; Karakurt et al., 2021; Mert, 2018; Saifan et al., 2015; Sharrock et al., 2021; Söyünmez et al., 2021; Türkkan et al., 2021) and must be reported. However, lack of education is the reason why it is not reported. This is entirely due to the insufficient knowledge and perceptions of health professionals and nurses about child abuse (Akgül et al., 2021; Alabay, 2020; Aslan and Erkol, 2021; Atencion et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2017; Kaplan et al., 2020; Karadag, 2021; Kılıçaslan et al., 2020; Kurtuncu et al., 2015; Lines et al., 2018; Metin et al., 2021; Orak and Okanlı, 2015; Saifan et al., 2015; Söyünmez et al., 2021; Uysal et al., 2021; Yükseler, 2020). Therefore, cases often remain confidential and unreported. However, healthcare workers are not responsible for proving the crime. Their responsibility is to report cases in which they find indications of crime (Karadag, 2021). The fact that there are cases that are unreported on the grounds of uncertainty clearly shows that the concept of child abuse should be questioned from the perspective of health professionals.

The most appropriate area to evaluate the perception of nurses, who are the key team members in this issue, about child abuse, is nursing education. Evaluating nursing students' perceptions of child abuse and their perspectives, especially the definition of child abuse through their eyes, forms the essence of the subject. This step contributes to determining the deficiencies, planning trainings, and revealing the basis of the problems experienced by nurses in reporting child abuse. Although this is an important issue, there are no studies in the literature evaluating how the concept of child abuse is perceived and interpreted by nursing students.

Metaphors are the most appropriate method of making sense of a concept from the perspective of a population. Metaphors allow the reflection of nursing roles and responsibilities in health care, which makes them important in terms of nursing (Özveren et al., 2018). For this reason, the present study aimed to reveal the perceptions of nursing students enrolled in a pediatric nursing course at a state-university in Turkey, about child abuse through the use of metaphors.

3. Methods

3.1. Study design

"Metaphor analysis" is a technique based on the phenomenological research method within the qualitative research methods. Metaphor analysis is a research technique used to learn hard-to-understand abstract concepts through analogies with known concepts (Keskin et al.,

2019). It offers a different view and approach to the target audience using easy-to-understand sentences. In other words, metaphors are an effective method for individuals to reveal their perceptions, solve problems, and create a mental model (Keskin et al., 2019; Limon and Durnali, 2018). The research was carried out with the metaphor analysis technique based on the phenomenological method. The reason why this method is preferred instead of asking direct questions about child abuse is to reach the real thoughts in the depths of students' minds. The study was completed in accordance with the SRQR guidelines (O'Brien et al., 2014).

3.2. Respondents and setting

The participants in this sample consisted of a convenience sample of third and fourth year state university nursing students who completed the Pediatric Nursing course ($n = 207$). The inclusion criteria were as follows: Having completed the Pediatric Nursing course with 80% participation live online (at least 11 weeks) or via video recording, volunteering to participate in the study. The exclusion criteria were as follows: Not having attended 20% or more of the lectures in the Pediatric Nursing course (at least 3 weeks) via live online participation or video recording; not having completed the course; not volunteering to participate in the study. This resulted in a sample size of $n = 186$.

3.3. Intervention

The "pediatric nursing" course is conducted in the third year of undergraduate nursing education, between February and June.

3.4. Instruments

Data were collected online using the Student Information Form and Semi-Structured Interview Form from June to August 2021 following the completion of the Pediatric Nursing course.

3.4.1. Student information form

The student information form was used to assess the class, gender, and age of the students.

3.4.2. Semi-structured interview form

The Semi-Structured Interview Form contained four questions aiming to evaluate the importance of pediatric nursing in preventing child abuse, suggestions for the prevention of child abuse, the strengths and weaknesses of current measures, and the contribution of child abuse awareness to reporting child abuse. This form also included a metaphor question. The meaning of "metaphor" was explained to the students and concretized with examples. Then, the participants were asked to complete the following statement: "Child abuse is similar to...because..." (Table 1)

3.5. Data collection procedures

After the completion of the 14-week Pediatric Nursing course, completed measurement tools (Student Information Form and Semi-Structured Interview Form) were collected from all students online outside college hours. The forms were sent to the e-mail addresses of the students registered in the system, and the students were requested to fill

Table 1

The semi-structured interview outline.

The semi-structured interview outline
What is the role of pediatric nursing in preventing child abuse?
What are your recommendations for the prevention of child abuse?
What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the current measures?
What is the contribution of child abuse awareness to reporting child abuse?
Metaphor question: "Child abuse is similar to...because..."

the forms and forward them to the e-mail address of the researcher and the instructor of the course available on the system. The data were collected using the Student Information Form and Semi-Structured Interview Form from June to August 2021.

3.6. Data analysis

Content analysis was used in the evaluation of the metaphors created by the students regarding the concept of child abuse. The basis of content analysis focuses on bringing together similar data within the framework of determined themes and concepts and interpreting them in a highly understandable way (Şimşek and Yıldırım, 2011). It is carried out in five steps. These steps are naming, classifying, categorizing, ensuring validity–reliability, and transferring data to digital media. In the naming step, the metaphors created by the students were listed, and 12 students who failed to come up with metaphors were excluded from the research. In the classification step, similarities and differences of the metaphors were evaluated and then listed accordingly. In the categorization step, five different categories were created based on the metaphor list and grouping classification. In the validity–reliability step, five lecturers were requested to provide expert opinions. The Cohen's K coefficient, which reflects the agreement between the coders, was found to be 0.84. In the last step, all data was transferred to digital media.

3.7. Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee (dated 21.06.2021 and protocol number 2021/05-35) and written informed consent was obtained from the students who volunteered to participate in the research. Principles of the Declaration of Helsinki were adhered to throughout the research.

4. Results

4.1. Sample characteristics of the respondents

The sample size that met the inclusion criteria of the study was 186. A total of 12 students were excluded from the study due to lack of metaphors in the semi-structured form, and the study was completed with 174 students. 84.48% of the students participating in the study were girls, and the mean age was 22.73 ± 2.68 years (Table 2). According to the data obtained from the semi-structured form, most of the students stated that the accurate interpretation of child abuse by nursing students is very important in preventing and reporting child abuse. They stated that the weakest aspect of the measures taken against child abuse is the inadequacy of holistically handling the issue. The participants believed that child abuse was the result of many factors; therefore they made suggestions to improve all factors. These included controlling substance and alcohol abuse, making family education compulsory,

Table 2
Sociodemographic and descriptive characteristics of students (N = 174).

Socio-demographic and descriptive characteristics	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Mean age	22.73 ± 2.68 years	
Year		
3rd year	101	58.05
4th year	73	41.95
Gender		
Female	147	84.48
Male	27	15.52
Total	174	100.00

adding abuse education to the curriculum at schools, and restructuring the legal framework not only for punishment but also for prevention and deterrence.

4.2. Main outcomes

The students participating in the study came up with 36 metaphors related to the concept of “child abuse”. The first three metaphors associated with the concept map by the students were “landslide” (f = 14), “massacre” (f = 12) and “plucking a flower from its branch” (f = 12), respectively. Metaphors were clearly separated, and no metaphors were identified in common categories. The metaphors created by the students about child abuse were grouped in five categories: “disaster (10 metaphors),” “hurting (5 metaphors),” “ended before it began (7 metaphors),” “not being like it was before (9 metaphors),” and “hunting (5 metaphors)” (Table 3, Figs. 1, 2).

4.2.1. Metaphor category 1: disaster (10 metaphors)

In this study, students compared child abuse to a disaster that had occurred. They stated that child abuse resembles disasters such as earthquakes, pandemics, tornadoes, and storms that cause great material and moral damage. Moreover, 14 of the students compared child abuse to a landslide (Table 3, Figs. 1, 2). One the students stated the following: “Child abuse is like an all-consuming landslide. It engulfs the vegetation, the houses, and the souls living in the house and drags them to nothingness. It causes serious material, moral, psychological, and sociological

Table 3
Categories of metaphors created by nursing students regarding the concept of child abuse (N = 174).

Categories	Metaphors	Frequency
Disaster	Landslide (f = 14)	76
	Massacre (f = 12)	
	Pandemic (f = 10)	
	Earthquake (f = 10)	
	Murder (f = 6)	
	Tornado (f = 6)	
	Storm (f = 6)	
	An attack in the dark (f = 4)	
	Mixing of wastewater into the sea (f = 4)	
	Poisonous flowers destroying vegetation (f = 4)	
Hurting	Plucking a flower from its branch (f = 12)	34
	Breaking the wing of a dove (f = 8)	
	Axing a tree (f = 8)	
	Uprooting a fruit-bearing tree from the ground (f = 4)	
	Breaking the wing of an angel (f = 2)	
Ended before it began	Collapse of a new building from its foundation (f = 10)	26
	Taking a child's life away (f = 4)	
	Extinguishing life where hope blooms (f = 4)	
	Extinguishing a strong light source (f = 2)	
	Ending life before death (f = 2)	
	Driving a working car off a cliff (f = 2)	
	Killing a healthy newborn (f = 2)	
Not being like it was before	A deep and permanent scar (f = 10)	26
	An non-healing wound (f = 2)	
	Suture scar (f = 2)	
	Birth mark (f = 2)	
	Cherry stain on a new white t-shirt (f = 2)	
	Ink mark on a clean page (f = 2)	
	Bleach stain on a favorite dress (f = 2)	
	A puzzle with pieces missing (f = 2)	
	Broken vase (f = 2)	
Hunting	The strong preying on the weak (f = 4)	12
	Chasing prey from high and catching at the vulnerable moment (f = 2)	
	Lion attacking a gazelle cub (f = 2)	
	Hunting scenes in documentaries (f = 1)	
	Wild animals attacking weaker animals (f = 3)	
Total	36	174

unforgettable event such as abuse that will affect the child's entire life, the experience may negatively affect the child's life, as can the negative effects of the pandemic (69-Female)."

4.2.2. Metaphor category 2: hurting (5 metaphors)

This category had the most metaphors after the disaster category. The students stated that child abuse causes great harm to a living thing that is not only able to hurt anything else but cannot even protect itself (Table 3, Figs. 1, 2). One of the students made the following statement: "Child abuse is like plucking a flower from its branch because it will not be the same as before; that flower will fade, just like our children (3-Female)." Another student stated the following, "Child abuse is like breaking a dove's wing because when the wing of the dove is broken, the broken part will always be missing. While flying, it will always wobble on the broken side; it will not be able to fly like other doves. Irrespective of the type of abuse, child abuse will affect the child badly and will be imprinted in his/her consciousness, similar to that of the absence cause by a broken wing. In every period of the child's life, regardless of age, emotions and behaviors such as fear, anger, hurt, lack, inadequacy, and inability to cope will resurface when abuse is mentioned or when the child remembers it, reads about it, or sees it in another place. It will affect the child's life badly and will always be a sore spot (20-Male)."

4.2.3. Metaphor category 3: ended before it began (7 metaphors)

In this category, students expressed child abuse as an action that ends a new and clean life and a bright future before it begins. Seven metaphors were identified in this category (Table 3, Figs. 1, 2). A student stated the following: "Child abuse is like demolishing a brand new building from the ground up because when your brand new house is destroyed while you are in it, all you experience are the feelings of fear, helplessness, and insecurity. The biggest impacts of abuse on the child are the feelings of fear, shame, and insecurity. In all this emotional turmoil, the child collapses emotionally. This negatively affects the developmental period of the child. The child falls behind its peers because of seeing himself or herself as inadequate and lacking in every aspect of his or her life. This, in time, prepares the ground for a collapse in the inner world of the child (6-Female)." Another student said, "Child abuse is like taking a child's life away because abuse casts a shadow on his life energy, his attachment to life, his lifelong happiness, the work he will do, the trust he will show in the people who will be a part of his life. It affects all of these negatively, and you take the life of a child away from him (1-Male)". Similar expressions were observed in all metaphors in this category.

4.2.4. Metaphor category 4: not being like it was before (9 metaphors)

In this category, students stated that child abuse is an action that leaves traces that will last a lifetime and will never be forgotten. Nine metaphors were created in this category (Table 3, Figs. 1, 2). A student stated the following: "Child abuse is like a deep and permanent scar. Regardless of the type of abuse, it causes deep and unforgettable trauma in the child's life. It's a disgusting and brutal act. Children are today's tomorrow and tomorrow's hope (25-Female)." Similarly, another student said, "Child abuse is like splashing bleach on your favorite T-shirt because that mark destroys the color of your favorite shirt. It is remembered every time you wear it. The child never lets himself/herself forget (63-Male)." Another student stated the following: "Child abuse is like a puzzle with missing pieces. It steals an important part of a child's life. It spoils the whole picture. That life will always be missing pieces (17-Male)."

4.2.5. Metaphor category 5: hunting (5 metaphors)

In this category, students stated that child abuse is like the wild nature shown in documentaries. They stated that there is a power difference in abuse: one side is strong and superior, whereas the other side is weak and helpless. Five metaphors were created in this category (Table 3, Figs. 1, 2). A student stated the following: "Child abuse is like the nature documentaries, where the strong prey on the weak because the strong side is superior, fast, and big. The prey is small, cannot resist, and is helpless. However, one should not forget that there is no torture even in the wild.

Hunting is part of the cycle of life. In other words, although I liken abuse to hunting, animals are much more innocent. They do it just to maintain their species and survive (41-Male)." Similarly, another student said, "Child abuse is like wild animals attacking an animal that cannot defend itself. There is an element of power and dominance in abuse. This is what's so despicable about abuse. Taking advantage of the helplessness of a child and abusing the child while knowing that it cannot resist shows the character of the abuser (92-Male)." Another student said, "It is like a lion attacking a gazelle cub because there is a huge power difference between them. It is about attacking what you conceive as weak. Children are also weak, but they should not be attacked because they are weak. On the contrary, they should be protected (66-Male)."

5. Discussion

Considering that metaphors are powerful tools used in understanding and explaining an abstract and complex concept, this study aimed to reveal the perceptions of nursing students about the concept of child abuse via metaphors. The reason why this method is preferred instead of asking direct questions about child abuse is to reach the real thoughts in the depths of students' minds. The findings of the research are discussed in this section. This is also established by law. Article 280 of the Turkish Law on the reporting obligations of healthcare professionals states the following: "Despite encountering any indication that a crime has been committed, healthcare professionals (doctor, dentist, pharmacist, midwife, nurse, or other healthcare professionals) who do not report the situation to the competent authorities or hesitate to make a decision to notify the authorities will be punished with imprisonment up to one year" (Martinello, 2020; Mulder et al., 2018; Türkkkan et al., 2021). According to the ecological approach, child abuse is the product of many factors, not a single act. Therefore, understanding child abuse can only be possible when all factors are considered. Similar to the findings of the present study, studies have clearly stated that evaluating child abuse via an ecological approach can guide the trainings and practices in this field (Türkkkan et al., 2021). The risk factors expressed by the students in the study were also frequently mentioned in literature, and it was observed that the study findings were consistent with those in literature (Akçe and Doğan, 2020; Martinello, 2020; Özcan et al., 2017; Pekdoğan, 2016; Söyünmez et al., 2021; Türkkkan et al., 2021). The suggestions of the students were also about the risk factors. These included controlling alcohol and substance abuse, making abuse education compulsory in health and education curricula, and making laws more deterrent. Many studies in literature also recommend the same (Martinello, 2020; Mulder et al., 2018; Paslı, 2017; Pekdoğan, 2016; Söyünmez et al., 2021; Türkkkan et al., 2021).

In the present study, 174 students created 36 metaphors, which were grouped in five categories. It is noteworthy that although the number of metaphors created by the students was high, the metaphors were grouped in very few categories. The high number of created metaphors reveals that the perception and perspective on child abuse are multifaceted. The collection of these metaphors in a small number of categories reflects a different situation. This shows that although individuals reflect their perceptions with different expressions, they describe situations that are similar to each other; therefore, a large number of metaphors are collected in a small number of categories. These categories are "disaster," "hurting," "ended before it began," "not being like it was before," and "hunting." It is observed that all of the categories and the metaphors they contain reflect negative perceptions.

Studies in literature evaluate the views and perceptions of different disciplines on child abuse. Most of these are quantitative studies (Karakurt et al., 2021; Pesen and Epçaçan, 2021; Uysal et al., 2021). In these studies, child abuse was evaluated using scales and questionnaires, and parameters such as the knowledge level, awareness of the participants, and the risk factors they defined were examined. Karakurt et al. (2021) stated that teachers' awareness regarding the identification of risk factors for child abuse was moderate (Karakurt et al., 2021). Uysal et al.

(2021) conducted a study on university students and stated that the knowledge level of the students who received education on abuse were higher than those who did not (Uysal et al., 2021). Gümüş et al. (2021) stated that dentistry students from all classes needed information about child abuse and their knowledge level was low (Gümüş et al., 2021). Çetin et al. (2021) conducted a study on family physicians and found that 50.7% of physicians considered themselves as having inadequate levels of knowledge regarding child abuse and neglect, whereas 126 (96.9%) needed to be informed about child abuse and neglect (Çetin et al., 2021). Bozkurt and Bağ (2021) evaluated the factors affecting nurses' awareness regarding abuse and determined that being a woman, having more work experience, and encountering child sexual abuse are positive factors in defining the risk of abuse (Bozkurt and Bağ, 2021). In another study using the same measurement tool to evaluate risk identification for child abuse, health professionals stated that their knowledge level, risk identification competencies, and the number/hours of courses they took in the education curricula were insufficient (Yükseler, 2020). Another study using the same risk identification scale on pediatric specialists and pediatric surgeons reported similar results (Kılıçaslan et al., 2020). İshak et al. (2019) evaluated child abuse awareness among 112 emergency personnel and found that the level of awareness of these personnel regarding child abuse and neglect was insufficient (İshak et al., 2019).

On the other hand, qualitative studies in which views and perceptions about child abuse were evaluated and provided in-depth data are very limited. In a qualitative study on the views of eight classroom teachers and three counselors on child abuse, Eken (2021) found that the participants approached sexual and physical abuse types with higher sensitivity and interest than emotional abuse and neglect. The main reasons for this were stated as the lack of knowledge and awareness about the types of abuse. The author stated that the said deficiency is a major obstacle in the detection, notification and judicial reporting, support, and monitoring processes of abuse (Eken, 2021). In their study evaluating teachers' views on child neglect and abuse, Demircioğlu and Işık (2021) found that teachers mostly defined neglect as the failure to meet physical and basic needs, defined sexual abuse as any physical contact that disturbs the child, physical abuse as beating the child, emotional abuse as humiliating/insulting, and economic abuse as child labor (Demircioğlu and Işık, 2021). Bayrak's (2019b) study, which investigated teacher candidates' perceptions of child abuse with metaphors, similar to our research findings (Bayrak, 2019b). Child abuse defined as pickled flower, cutting a tree limb, earthquake, hurricane, bird with a fractured wing, trail. In a similar study with parents, metaphors and categories similar to our research findings appeared, including weed with roots, bird with damaged wing, and broken vase (Bayrak, 2019a). Similar to the literature, the students in the research also emphasized the irreversibility, destructive and permanent effects of child abuse in their metaphors. There is no other study in literature in which the perceptions of health professionals and nurses toward child abuse were evaluated using a qualitative method.

5.1. Limitation

There are potential drawbacks to analyzing translated data, such as probable misinterpretation of what participants stated or the loss of cultural nuances in translated data.

5.2. Implications for nursing practice

There has been an increase in studies on child abuse in Turkey, and the largest increase was reported between the years 2016 and 2020 (Derebağçe and Özerk, 2021). However, most of the studies were performed to protect children or evaluate certain parameters across different professional disciplines or candidates. There is no previous study evaluating how nurses, the occupational group that encounters child abuse most frequently, perceive and explain child abuse during

their training period. In fact, examining the concept of child abuse through the eyes of nursing students is the most important step in providing accurate education on abuse to nursing students, children, families, and society. Evaluating the concept of "child abuse," which is complex to understand and explain, in nursing students using a simulation method, such as metaphors, allows us to analyze an important issue in the right population using the right method. Therefore, the present study will shed light on children, families, nurses, nursing education, society, and literature.

6. Conclusions

The present study found that nursing students considered education important in preventing abuse and that providing education was one of the most common suggestions. The main finding of the study was that although the students expressed their views on child abuse in different ways, these views shared common ground and were grouped under a small number of categories. In other words, students with similar perspectives expressed themselves with different metaphors. The fact that all the metaphors expressed by the students were negative and the expressions were extremely sharp (disaster, ending before it begins, hunting, etc.) reveal the severity of the subject. Qualitative data on child abuse across different disciplines and quantitative data in the field of health show that correctly perceiving and defining child abuse and providing the accurate education regarding abuse is extremely important for reporting cases and increasing public welfare.

Ethics statements

Ethical approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Aksaray University, Turkey (2021/05-35, 2021). Moreover, written permission was obtained from the Department of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences, Aksaray University. The study protocol adhered to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Funding sources

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to thank the lecturers who gave expert opinions and participants their valuable contributions in this study.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2022.105359>.

References

- (WHO), W.H.O., 2019. Child Maltreatment.
- Akçe, İ., Doğan, H., 2020. An evaluation on children exposed to sexual abuse. *Turk. J. Soc. Work* 4, 12–20.
- Akgül, E., Darak, S., Sisman, F.N., Ergun, A., 2021. Effect of the nurse-Led" I am the hero of my body" program on the sexual abuse knowledge of children: a quasi-experimental study. *J. Psychiatr. Nurs.* 12, 156.
- Aktay, M., 2020. Effects and treatment of abuse and neglect on children. *J. Dev. Psychol.* 1, 169–184.
- Alabay, E., 2020. Sexual abuse and early intervention programs for sexual abuse prevention. *Eurasian J. Res. Soc. Econ.* 7, 32–43.

- Aslan, F., Erkol, Z.Z., 2021. Child monitoring centers and university child protection implementation and research centers in Turkey. *Turkey Clin.* 1, 85–92.
- Atencio, B.C., Alingalan, A., Oducado, R.M., Cordova, J.D., Dumaguang, M., Suaboksan, M.T., 2019. Factors associated with intention to report child abuse among district hospital nurses in Iloilo, Philippines. *Int. J. Caring Sci.* 12, 210–217.
- Bayrak, H.U., 2019a. Child abuse from parent's eyes: a metaphoric study. *J. Soc. Soc. Work* 30, 376–389.
- Bayrak, H.U., 2019b. A metaphoric evaluation with pre-service teachers on child abuse: the case of Niğde province. *J. Kirsehir Educ. Fac.* 20.
- Bekgöz, B., Özkan, E.U., İshak, Ş., 2019. Awareness levels of emergency medical services professionals on child neglect and abuse: a study in Ankara. *J. Med. Soc. Work* 0, 90–106.
- Bozkurt, G., Bağ, Ö.F., 2021. Investigation of factors affecting nurses' awareness of child abuse and neglect. *J. Anatolia Nurs. Health Sci.* 24, 17–24.
- Ceccucci, J., 2018. Evaluating nurse practitioners perceived knowledge, competence, and comfort level in caring for the sexually abused child. *J. Forensic Nurs.* 14, 42–49.
- Çetin, E., Koç, E.M., Aksoy, H., 2021. Assessment of level of information of family medicine assistants in İzmir on child abuse and child neglect. *J. Contin. Med. Educ.* 30, 9–17.
- Demircioğlu, H., Işık, E., 2021. Çocuk İhmal ve İstismarına Yönelik Öğretmen Görüşlerinin İncelenmesi. *Sosyal Bilimler Derg.* 8, 313–351.
- Derebağcı, G.E., Özerk, H., 2021. The analysis and discussion regarding the researches concerning child abuse prevention programs from 1995–2020 in Turkey. *J. Soc. Humanit. Adm. Sci.* 4, 651–670.
- Eken, M., 2021. The communicative approach to child abuse: a study on the communicative experiences and competencies of primary school teachers. *J. Selcuk Univ. Soc. Sci. Inst.*
- Eslek, D., Yılmaz Irmak, T., 2022. Çocuk cinsel istismarını Önlemede "Dersimiz: Güvenli İlişkiler" Programının Etkilliliğinin Değerlendirilmesi. *Türk Psikoloji Derg.* 89, 1–78.
- Evgin, D., Sümen, A., 2021. Childhood abuse, neglect, codependency, and affecting factors in nursing and child development students. *Perspect. Psychiatr. Care* 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ppc.12938>.
- Fraser, J.A., Mathews, B., Walsh, K., Chen, L., Dunne, M., 2010. Factors influencing child abuse and neglect recognition and reporting by nurses: a multivariate analysis. *Int. J. Nurs. Stud.* 47, 146–153.
- Gümüş, H., Kızılay, F., Öztürk, G., Kızılcı, E., 2021. Knowledge and attitudes of Erciyes university faculty of dentistry students regarding child abuse. *Selcuk Dent. J.* 8, 82–87.
- Jin, Y., Chen, J., Jiang, Y., Yu, B., 2017. Evaluation of a sexual abuse prevention education program for school-age children in China: a comparison of teachers and parents as instructors. *Health Educ. Res.* 32, 364–373.
- Kaplan, B., Çalışkan, Z., Evgin, D., 2020. Investigation of child abuse and neglect regarding the field of nursing graduate thesis made in Turkey. *Nevşehir J. Sci. Technol.* 9, 135–141.
- Karadag, M., 2021. Investigation of sociodemographic and clinical features of forensic cases evaluated in a university hospital child and adolescent psychiatry clinic. *Dicle Med. J.* 48, 187–196.
- Karakurt, N., Durmaz, H., Kanbur, A., 2021. Opinions and levels of awareness of teachers about child abuse and neglect. *J. Hacet. Univ. Fac. Nurs.* 8, 22–28.
- Keskin, M.O., Yıldız, Ö.Ö., Aksakal, E., 2019. Metaphoric perceptions of medical school students about ethical concept. *Ihlara J. Educ. Res.* 4, 300–313.
- Kılıçaslan, F., Güngören, S., Gökçeoğlu, S., Ayaydın, H., 2020. Evaluation of knowledge levels and attitudes of pediatrics and pediatric surgery specialists working in Şanlıurfa province on child abuse and neglect. *J. Harran Univ. Med. Fac.* 17, 330–334.
- Kurtuncu, M., Akhan, L.U., Tanir, I.M., Yıldız, H., 2015. The sexual development and education of preschool children: knowledge and opinions from doctors and nurses. *Sex. Disabil.* 33, 207–221.
- Limón, İ., Durnalı, M., 2018. Phd students' metaphoric perceptions on doctorate education and instructors. *Sakarya Univ. J. Educ.* 8, 26–40.
- Lines, L., Grant, J., Hutton, A., 2018. How do nurses keep children safe from abuse and neglect, and does it make a difference? A scoping review. *J. Pediatr. Nurs.* 43, e75–e84.
- Martinello, E., 2020. Applying the ecological systems theory to better understand and prevent child sexual abuse. *Sex. Cult.* 24, 326–344.
- Mert, İ.S., 2018. The investigation of the most stressful critical incidents that experienced by nurses and intern nurses by using quantitative research metod. *Electron. J. Soc. Sci.* 17, 1043–1059.
- Metin, Ö., Toros, F., Karci, C.K., 2021. Gender and age-related differences in sexually abused child and adolescents: predictors of psychopathology. *Turk. J. Clin. Psychiatry* 24, 86–98.
- Mulder, T.M., Kuiper, K.C., van der Put, C.E., Stams, G.-J.J., Assink, M., 2018. Risk factors for child neglect: a meta-analytic review. *Child Abuse Negl.* 77, 198–210.
- O'Brien, B.C., Harris, L.B., Beckman, T.J., Reed, D.A., Cook, D.A., 2014. Standards for reporting qualitative research: a synthesis of recommendations. *Acad. Med.* 89, 1245–1251.
- Orak, O.S., Okanlı, A., 2015. The Effect of Protective Based Psychosocial Initiatives Applied to Mothers and Children on Their Knowledge Against Sexual Abuse. *Psychiatric Nursing Department. Atatürk University.*
- Özcan, Ç., Saç, R.Ü., Taşar, M.A., 2017. Sociodemographic features of adolescents who had abuse experiences. *Turk. J. Pediatr. Dis.* 12, 18–25.
- Özveren, H., Özden, D., Gülnar, E., 2018. The perception of nursing by first-year nursing students: a metaphor analysis. *J. Health Sci.* 27, 162–169.
- Paşlı, F., 2017. An examination of children who exposed to sexual abuse according to ecological system theory. *Gazi J. Health Sci.* 2, 39–53.
- Pekdoğan, S., 2016. Investigation of mothers' abuse potentials according to some variables. *Ege J. Educ.* 17, 425–441.
- Pesen, A., Epeçan, U., 2021. The relationship between candidate teachers' decision-making styles with knowledge and awareness levels towards child neglect and abuse. *J. Soc. Soc. Work* 32, 121–140.
- Saifan, A.R., Alrimawi, I.A., Bashayreh, I., 2015. Nurses' perceptions about child abuse. *Int. J. Adv. Nurs. Stud.* 4, 30.
- Sharrock, S., Liddar, A., Roberts, E., Turley, C., Collins, D., 2021. In: Feasibility of a Survey on Child Abuse: Qualitative Research Findings: 21/01/2021, pp. 1–58.
- Şimşek, H., Yıldırım, A., 2011. Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri. Seçkin Yayıncılık, Ankara.
- Söyünmez, S., Zülkar, Y., Turan, F.D., Dalgıç, A.İ., 2021. Awareness about abuse of parents who have children with epilepsy. *J. Turk. Chapter Int. League Against Epilepsy* 27, 102–112.
- Taylor, L.E., Harris, H.S., 2018. Stewards of children education: increasing undergraduate nursing student knowledge of child sexual abuse. *Nurse Educ. Today* 60, 147–150.
- Türkkan, T., Odacı, H., Bülbül, K., 2021. Understanding child abuse and neglect: an ecological approach. *J. Soc. Soc. Work* 32, 709–728.
- Tweedie, J., Vincent, S., 2019. Adult student nurses' experiences of encountering perceived child abuse or neglect during their community placement: implications for nurse education. *Nurse Educ. Today* 73, 60–64.
- Uysal, G., Bozkurt, G., Sönmez Düzakaya, D., 2021. Determination of child abuse and neglect awareness of university students. *J. Psychiatr. Nurs.* 12.
- Yükseler, A., 2020. Identification of Level of Knowledge and Awareness About Child Abuse and Neglect Working as Medical Personnel in Malatya. İnönü University Health Sciences Institute.