



Original Article

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and psychiatric nursing specialty

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Abstract

Objectives: The fact that distance education has been switched to with the pandemic and physical limitation measures have affected the thesis processes in postgraduate education. It is important for mental health and psychiatric nurses, who have roles in protecting and improving community mental health, to adapt to the developments and changes brought about by the pandemic in terms of crisis management and the long-term effects of the pandemic. Postgraduate dissertations for nursing care based on scientific results constitute important evidence. In the research, the adaptation of mental health and psychiatric nursing postgraduate dissertations to the special conditions of the pandemic was examined. The type of research, data collection methods, interventions, and the reflections of the pandemic on the dissertation topic were evaluated.

Methods: In the descriptive type of research, the postgraduate dissertations were scanned on September 05, 2022, at the Council of Higher Education Thesis Center using the document review method. A total of 107 dissertations completed between 2020 and 2022 in the departments of Mental Health and Diseases Nursing, Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing, Psychiatric Nursing, permission to publish theses in the database, approved were examined, 62 dissertations that met the inclusion criteria were included in the research.

Results: Five of the dissertations included in the research are doctoral dissertations. It was determined that 75.8% of the dissertations were descriptive, descriptive-cross-sectional, and descriptive-relational types, 51.6% of the data were obtained by face-to-face interview, and 27.4% of the sample group were nurses and health workers. It has been determined that research has been conducted with patients who are diagnosed with coronavirus disease -19 and nursing nurses.

Conclusion: It has been determined that descriptive, descriptive-cross-sectional, and descriptive-relational type of research is intensive in master's degree dissertations, and this situation was similar before the pandemic. In experimental and semi-experimental dissertations, distance and hybrid intervention programs have shown the importance of telepsychiatry/tele mental health applications. It has been determined that the data are often obtained face-to-face, distance and hybrid methods are used in intervention programs, and the pandemic is included in the dissertations topics.

Keywords: Academic dissertation; education; pandemics; psychiatric nursing; student.

For almost 3 years, the coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) pandemic has caused many individuals to become ill and die all around the world. Globally, severe restrictive isolation measures have been implemented to regulate the negative process and control disease spread. Although the disease's

spread and course have been generally under control, and pandemic measures have been stretched, many social systems have been impacted, particularly in the 2020–2021 timeframe, and education is one of them. Postgraduate education had its fair share as well; to continue teaching and

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training activities, a shift to distant education and proper assesment techniques were implemented.^[1,2]

It has been shown that postgraduate education during the pandemic period led to a variety of positive and negative theoretical and thesis experiences. Students in theoretical courses rated distance education well in terms of time management, access to education, absence of spatial limits, and cost-effectiveness. On the other hand, it was also said that there were issues in the lessons owing to a lack of infrastructure, which resulted in limited communication and contact between faculty members and their peers, negatively impacting the motivation of the lesson.^[3-6] While distance assesment techniques were rated well for responsibility, collaboration, and time management, technical and infrastructural issues resulted in unpleasant experiences.^[2] It is also mentioned that transportation for faculty members and access to proper academic counseling were issuing.^[5] Technology literacy has emerged as a requirement in both courses, homework, and examinations.^[2,4-6] This circumstance is mirrored in the theses. When the theses are investigated during the pandemic period, it is stated that the pandemic has a negative impact on the student's thesis procedures, the theses are delayed, and the thesis defense examination is postponed. It is reported that someone had to adapt their thesis method and make their thesis defense online in accordance with pandemic measures. The students were concerned about not being able to finish their theses.^[7,8] The rates of anxiety disorder and depression among graduate students were considerable during the pandemic period; it has been reported that being in the thesis period is a risk factor for the level of anxiety.^[9]

Mental health and psychiatric nursing is a nursing specialization. This area of expertise has significant responsibility for maintaining and improving the state of an individual's, family's, and community's mental health, as well as disease prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. Its goal is to help people attain their full potential and take charge of their own health. Clinical and academic research is used to support these objectives.^[10,11] During the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health and psychiatric nursing specialty students were responsible for completing their studies as well as professionally dealing with the mental health of the community. In addition to the issues associated with theses, most theses necessitate direct contact with individuals. However, the period of pandemic measures had an impact on direct contact. One of the main goals of nursing is to educate professionals who are attentive to all types of developments and changes that may influence the health of the individual, family, and community and who can provide service in this area.^[12] Furthermore, postgraduate theses must take an original and inovative approach.^[13] In keeping with this purpose, mental health and psychiatric nurses must adapt to present conditions and the new system

What is presently known on this subject?

- The pandemic has impacted the completion process of graduate theses.

What does this article add to the existing knowledge?

- Throughout the pandemic period
 - Graduate theses in mental health and psychiatric nursing are mostly descriptive, descriptive-cross-sectional, and descriptive-relational in type.
 - Face-to-face interviews were typically used to collect data.
 - The most commonly researched sample group is the nurses and health workers.
 - Distance and hybrid intervention models are used in quasi-experimental and experimental studies.

What are the implications for practice?

- During the pandemic period, data on the risk categories that mental health and psychiatric nurses prioritized in terms of mental health care were acquired. It is envisioned that it will serve as a guide for both intervention programs for risk groups in particular situations, such as pandemics, and future postgraduate theses.

throughout the pandemic. The subject and approach of postgraduate theses in the field of mental health and psychiatric nursing were studied in this research in terms of their adaptation to the new scenarios brought about by pandemic conditions. Furthermore, it was intended to identify the risk groups and conditions that mental health and psychiatric nurses regard as being of high priority in terms of mental health during the pandemic period. The answers to the following questions were analyzed for these purposes:

- What type of researches were the theses done on during the pandemic?
- How were the data collected in the theses conducted during the pandemic's time obtained?
- How were the initiatives implemented in the theses conducted during the pandemic period?
- Is the COVID-19 pandemic included in the theses themes of the theses conducted during the pandemic period?

Materials and Method

Study Design

Postgraduate theses were scanned using the document review method through the database of the Council of Higher Education (CHE) Thesis Center in the descriptive research.

Data Collection and Processing

On September 05, 2022, a total of 107 theses recorded between 2020 and 2022 in the departments of Mental Health and Diseases Nursing, Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing, and Psychiatric Nursing were reached in the CHE thesis center, in accordance with the names of mental health and psychiatric nursing postgraduate programs opened in health sciences institutes. 62 thesis studies that matched the criteria for inclusion in the research were analyzed and classified according to the departments in which the relevant theses were

Table 1. The number of theses included by department

Departments	Total number of theses	Data collection date: Not specified	Data collected before March 2020	Number of theses included in the research
Mental health and disease nursing	12	2	5	5
Mental health and psychiatric nursing	32	2	15	15
Psychiatric nursing	63	1	20	42
Total	107	5	40	62

conducted (Table 1). One of the researchers performed the data collection, while the other ensured that the studies included in the sample met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The studies included in the study were classified based on the variables of research type, data collection method, sample, concept explored, and intervention application method in experimental and quasi-experimental research. The research was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

Inclusion Criteria

The following criteria were included in the study:

- Data collection dates are as of March 2020, when our country implemented restricted measures.
- Having permission to publish in the CHE database.
- To have been approved.

Exclusion Criteria

- The research excludes theses whose data collection dates are not indicated in the material and method section.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics, numbers, and percentages were employed to evaluate the data.

Results

Doctoral dissertations comprised five of the 62 postgraduate theses, and Table 2 summarizes the findings about the methods of them.

When data collection methods were examined by research type, it was found that face-to-face data collection was at the forefront, particularly in descriptive, descriptive-cross-sectional, and descriptive-relational research groups (Table 3).

When the theses' subjects were examined, it was found that the COVID-19 pandemic was included in the studies' subjects. Table 4 shows the distribution of the scales utilized in these theses. In one study, the relationship between loneliness and depression in patients treated in a hospital due to COVID-19 was investigated, the experiences of patients with COVID-19 were investigated in another, and the validity and reliability

Table 2. Methods of postgraduate theses

Method	n	%
Research type		
Descriptive, descriptive-cross-sectional, and descriptive-relational	47	75.8
Methodological	5	8.1
Qualitative	3	4.8
Quasi-experimental	5	8.1
Experimental	2	3.2
Data collection method		
Face-to-face	32	51.6
Distance	15	24.2
Hybrid	6	9.7
Unspecified	9	14.5
Sample		
Nurse- health workers	17	27.4
People with mental illness	14	22.6
People with physical illness	11	17.7
Non-professional caregivers - families	8	12.9
Nursing student- college student	4	6.5
Others	8	12.9
Total	62	100.0

study of the development of an emotion assessment scale regarding traumatic events was conducted in the third.^[14-16] The psychological effect levels of nurses who care for people with COVID-19 diagnoses were evaluated in a study with nurses and health workers, and anxiety, obsession, and related variables induced by the coronavirus pandemic in nurses were examined in another studies.^[17,18] Furthermore, when the theses in the "other" group in the sample group were studied, the feelings of attachment to animals and loneliness in people who had pets during the pandemic period were investigated.^[19]

Discussion

The research looked at postgraduate theses in mental health and psychiatric nursing that were planned and data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic period in terms of research type, data collection method, interventions, and subjects. As a result, descriptive, descriptive-cross-sectional, and descrip-

Table 3. The distribution of theses conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic period, according to research type

Research type	D-DC-DR		Methodological		Qualitative		Quasi-experimental		Experimental	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Characteristics of postgraduate theses										
Postgraduate level										
Master	47	100.0	4	80.0	2	66.7	4	80.0	–	–
Doctorate (Phd)	–	–	1	20.0	1	33.3	1	20.0	2	100.0
Total	47	100.0	5	100.0	3	100.0	5	100.0	2	100.0
Data collection method										
Face-to-face	27	57.4	2	40.0	1	33.3	2	40.0	–	–
Distance	2	23.4	1	20.0	2	66.7	–	–	1	50.0
Hybrid	11	4.3	1	20.0	–	–	2	40.0	1	50.0
Unspecified	7	14.9	1	20.0	–	–	1	20.0	–	–
Total	47	100.0	5	100.0	3	100.0	5	100.0	2	100.0

D-DC-DR: Descriptive, descriptive-cross-sectional, and descriptive-relational

Table 4. Data collection tools used in theses examining the effect and results of the COVID-19 pandemic

Postgraduate theses	Sample	Data collection tools
Investigation of anxiety, obsession, and related variables caused by coronavirus outbreak in nurses	Nurses employed in a public hospital	-Continuity anxiety scale -Obsessive beliefs scale
Determination of mental affect status of nurses caring for patients with COVID-19	Working nurses at the COVID-19 units of a university hospital	-COVID-19 fear scale -Brief symptom inventory
Examination of animal attachment and loneliness in individuals who have pets during in COVID-19 pandemic	Individuals in Türkiye who own pets	-Lexington attachment to pet scale -UCLA loneliness scale
Life experiences of individuals with COVID-19: A qualitative study	Individuals with COVID-19 who are receiving inpatient treatment in a province	-Qualitative research
Investigation of the relationship between loneliness and depression in hospitalized patients with the diagnosis of COVID-19	Individuals with COVID-19 who are receiving inpatient treatment in a province	-UCLA loneliness scale -Beck depression inventory

COVID-19: Coronavirus disease 19.

tive-relational research types have been found, particularly in master's theses. Descriptive research may have been carried out primarily because it allows for time management and usually only one interview with individuals within the limits and restrictions of the pandemic process. On the other hand, quantitative studies in master's theses completed before the pandemic, as well as quasi-experimental and experimental studies in doctoral theses,^[20,21] may indicate that there is a research culture and tendency in this direction in the field independent of the pandemic. Another factor that contributes to this circumstance may be that the time allowed for the master's thesis period is shorter than that for doctoral theses.

Despite the challenges and constraints of the pandemic process, it was discovered in the research that the data collection method for the investigated theses was primarily face-to-face. In certain theses, the precautions taken to prevent contamination during the data collection process were emphasized while presenting the method used to col-

lect data.^[14,22-29] In addition, it has been established that it is preferable in distance and hybrid approaches, particularly in experimental theses. In addition to psychoeducation and art therapy interventions, it was established that data was collected using telepsychiatry resources in theses. There are online psychoeducation and teletherapy applications in mental diseases, according to the literature.^[30-34] The results achieved are similar to those achieved in doctoral dissertations conducted on a global scale. According to reports, during the pandemic, students were required to focus on virtual and distance approaches in their theses.^[35] Telepsychiatry services provide people with advantages in terms of time, space, and money.^[36] Despite the fact that studies have shown the effectiveness of telepsychiatry for more than 30 years, its use has been extremely limited until the COVID-19 pandemic.^[37] The physical restrictions caused by the pandemic can be viewed as accentuating an age-old desire. This condition was mirrored in the specialty theses in

mental health and psychiatric nursing as remote and hybrid data collection and intervention strategies.

When the sample of theses was examined, nurses-health workers, people with mental illnesses, and those with physical illnesses ranked first, second, and third, respectively. In post-pandemic master's theses, healthy people, nurses, and people with physical illnesses were used as sample groups; in doctoral theses, healthy people, people with physical illnesses, and people with mental illnesses were identified as the three most often researched groups.^[20] Similarly, Tel and Sabancıoğulları (2014) discovered that nurses were frequently sample groups in doctorate theses, and then studies in the field of consultation-liaison psychiatric nursing and with people with mental illness were done.^[21] It can be said that consultation-liaison psychiatry nursing services came to the fore during the pandemic process.^[38,39] When the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on study participants was examined, it was established that people with a COVID-19 diagnosis who underwent inpatient treatment and nurses who provided direct care to patients with a COVID-19 diagnosis were studied. In addition, research was undertaken on nurses' own anxiety and the psychological consequences of COVID-19 infection. Psychosocial interventions for health workers, patients, and their families are among the responsibilities, authorities, and obligations of consultation-liaison psychiatry nurses.^[10] Considering the challenges that nurses faced during the pandemic, it is acceptable to conclude that the theses formed are aimed at meeting the needs of the time in consultation-liaison psychiatry nursing practices.

Limitations

Only theses that were approved for publishing in the CHE database and whose data collecting period was after March 2020 were included in the research. It identifies constraints in terms of the consequences of the pandemic's early stages on the thesis completion process. Furthermore, the findings are limited to the research examined.

Conclusion

As a consequence, it was determined that during the COVID-19 pandemic period, most mental health and psychiatric nursing postgraduate theses were descriptive, descriptive-cross-sectional, or descriptive-relational in type; the studies were mostly conducted with a sample of nurses and health workers; and the data were mostly collected through face-to-face interviews, despite all of the pandemic's limiting measures. In addition to the psychosocial needs of COVID-19 patients, it has been determined that there is research on nurses who directly care for COVID-19 patients. Postgraduate theses have a very important place for evidence-based approaches that will meet the needs of the community. It serves as a guide for

emotional needs and interventions during times of physical constraints, such as pandemics. Taking into account the need areas determined in the descriptive theses and implementing intervention programs relating to these areas while preparing the theses can provide an answer to the needs of the community. Thesis advisors have a responsibility at this time. In today's technologically advanced world, it is critical for mental health and psychiatric nurses to introduce practices such as telepsychiatry/telemental health into their intervention programs, both to increase the accessibility of nursing care services and to define the roles of mental health and psychiatric nurses in these programs' teams in the future.

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