



## From a Cocoon to a Butterfly: The Experience of Nursing Students in Writing Nursing Care Plan

Kozadan Kelebeğe: Hemşirelik Öğrencilerinin Hemşirelik Bakım Planı Yazma Deneyimleri

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### ABSTRACT

**Aim:** Despite the crucial role of nursing care plans as written assignments in improving the quality of care delivered by nursing students, there is limited understanding of this phenomenon. So, this study aims to explore the nursing students' experience in writing nursing care plans through qualitative research in Turkey.

**Material and Method:** We undertook a phenomenological study with a content analysis approach in 2023. The selection of participants was based on non-probability and purposeful sampling. We employed semi-structured interviews to collect the data. The study involved students in their fourth year of the Bachelor of Science in nursing program who had written the nursing care plan before and desire to participate in the study. The MAXDA10 program was used to analyze the data.

**Results:** The student's average age was  $22.55 \pm 0.96$  years, with 77% of them being female, and 59% of them choosing the profession willingly. We identified one main theme: From a Cocoon to a Butterfly (transformative journey of nursing students as they progress from novices to skilled care planners). Also, the study identified three primary subthemes: "From a hard nut to crack to a piece of cake" and "From beginner to a professional" as well as a set of "Recommendations" for writing nursing care plans.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, our findings reveal that nursing students undergo a transformative process akin to a caterpillar in their care planning writing. Initially, this phase may seem daunting and time-consuming, potentially discouraging. However, as individuals progress, they grow and ultimately find fulfilment and professional satisfaction. The recommendations provided by the students offer valuable guidance for nursing educators and institutions.

**Keywords:** Nursing care plan, nursing process, qualitative research, nursing students, assignment

### ÖZ

**Amaç:** Hemşirelik öğrencileri tarafından verilecek bakımın kalitesinin artırılmasında ödev olarak hemşirelik bakım planlarının önemli rolü olmasına rağmen, bu fenomenin anlaşılması sınırlıdır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki hemşirelik öğrencilerinin hemşirelik bakım planı yazma deneyimlerini nitel araştırma yoluyla keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Gereç ve Yöntem:** 2023 yılında içerik analizi yaklaşımıyla fenomenolojik bir çalışma gerçekleştirildi. Katılımcılar olasılıksız ve amaçlı örnekleme ile seçildi. Veri toplamada yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden yararlanıldı. Araştırmaya daha önce hemşirelik bakım planı yazmış olan ve araştırmaya katılmaya istekli Hemşirelik Lisans Programı dördüncü sınıf öğrencileri katıldı. Verilerin analizinde MAXDA10 programı kullanıldı.

**Bulgular:** Öğrencilerin yaş ortalaması  $22,55 \pm 0,96$  yıl, %77'si kadın olup, %59'u mesleği isteyerek seçmiştir. Çalışmanın ana teması: Kozadan Kelebeğe (hemşirelik öğrencilerinin acemilikten ustalığa bakım planı yazmaya doğru ilerledikleri dönüştürücü yolculuk) olarak belirlendi. Ayrıca çalışmada hemşirelik bakımı planlarının yazılmasına yönelik bir dizi "Öneri"nin yanı sıra "Çetin cevizden çocuk oyuncağına" ve "Acemilikten ustalığa" şeklinde üç alt tema belirlendi.

**Sonuç:** Araştırma bulguları hemşirelik öğrencilerinin bakım planı yazımında tırtıl benzeri bir dönüşüm sürecinden geçtiklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Başlangıçta, bu aşama göz korkutucu, zaman alıcı, potansiyel olarak cesaret kırıcı olabilse de öğrenciler üst sınıflara geçtikçe gelirşirler ve sonuçta mesleki doyuma ulaşırlar. Öğrenciler tarafından belirtilen öneriler hemşirelik eğitimcileri ve kurumları için değerli rehberlik sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Hemşirelik bakım planı, hemşirelik süreci, nitel araştırma, hemşirelik öğrencileri, ödev

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## INTRODUCTION

Professional nursing education is rooted in the fusion of cultural and occupational knowledge, as well as the acquisition of clinical and theoretical skills, essential for cultivating proficient nurses endowed with critical thinking and decision-making acumen (1). The overarching goal of professional education is to convey fundamental concepts, challenges, and tools of the discipline while preparing practitioners to effectively synthesize, integrate, and apply theoretical knowledge within clinical contexts (2). The clinical essence of nursing education has spurred the development of educational strategies uniquely suited to the nursing field. One such strategy is the written nursing care plan, which has been a staple in teaching for numerous years (3). Integral to nursing practice, the nursing care plan plays a pivotal role. Despite growing criticism from nurse clinicians and academics regarding the clinical utility of nursing care plans, they serve as an organizational framework that guides nurses' knowledge, thoughts, and actions in patient care (4-6). Care planning acts as a roadmap, steering all involved in a patient's care. Nurses employ care plans to address nursing challenges that arise during treatment (7). Additionally, care plans are an indispensable facet of nursing education. Through the integration of nursing care plans into clinical training programs, students are provided with opportunities to meld theoretical knowledge with practical application, honing their skills and accruing clinical insights that ultimately contribute to elevated nursing care quality (8).

The formulation and execution of a nursing care plan embody a proactive, problem-solving approach encompassing patient assessment, nursing diagnosis determination, and critical thinking-dependent data synthesis and analysis. Although care planning is an integral facet of patient care, it often faces misunderstanding or is dismissed as a time-consuming endeavour within clinical practice (9, 10). Among students, planning and implementing a nursing care plan may seem challenging, and many approach this task with reluctance. Factors such as limited clinical exposure, insufficient theoretical grasp, and apprehension about making mistakes contribute to students' hesitance in embracing nursing care plans in clinical settings (11-14). A comprehensive patient assessment constitutes a foundational phase within this process (4, 15). However, students frequently encounter difficulties at this stage, leading to challenges in devising suitable nursing interventions (16).

Conversely, research findings indicate that students exhibit a commendable ability to identify nursing diagnoses and formulate fitting interventions aligned with projected outcomes, albeit at a moderate level (17, 18). The hallmark of delivering quality patient care hinges on nurses' capacity to create comprehensive care

plans (7, 19). Although nurse educators emphasize the importance of nursing care plans within both theoretical and practical instruction, students' comprehensive comprehension of their creation and application remains incomplete. Addressing this inadequacy requires delving into students' perceptions of nursing care plans, devising solutions to mitigate confusion, and transforming their perspective from uncertainty to proficiency. Such efforts will significantly influence the design and implementation of nursing education programs. Despite the prevalent use of nursing care plans in nursing education, limited qualitative research has delved into the unique experiences of nursing students tasked with crafting nursing care plans as assignments (20). Qualitative research methodologies prove invaluable when addressing intricate phenomena that lack straightforward explanations, introducing novel perspectives, or bridging gaps in existing knowledge (21). Consequently, this study aims to shed light on nursing students' encounters with composing nursing care plans through qualitative investigation conducted in Turkey.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Approval for this study was granted by the Ethics Committee for Health Sciences Scientific Research at Necmettin Erbakan University (Decision No.2022/370, ID:12767, Date 08.02.2023). The study's purpose and procedures were communicated verbally and in writing to all participants. Participants and their parents provided informed written consent before taking part. Participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences, and strict confidentiality measures were implemented to protect their anonymity. All audio recordings and transcripts are securely stored on a password-protected computer.

### Aim

This study aims to explore the nursing students' experience in writing nursing care plans through qualitative research.

### Design

We undertook a phenomenological study with a content analysis approach from March to August 2023. Our chosen design underscores the pursuit of a pure description of an experience, aiming to capture a more authentic representation of a phenomenon (22). Through this approach, we aim to present a multi-dimensional account of the lived experiences of nursing students in writing nursing care plan, aiming to uncover a profound comprehension of this phenomenon. The procedures and outcomes of our study adhere to the guidelines, Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) for reporting qualitative research (23).

## Participants and setting

This research was carried out at a university situated in the central region of Turkey. The study involved students in their fourth year of the undergraduate Bachelor of Science in Nursing program who had written the nursing care plan before and desire to participate in the study. Following the acquisition of ethical approval, a formal request was made to the Head of the Nursing Department to gain access to fourth-year nursing students. The selection of participants utilized non-probability, purposeful sampling, and initial communication was established via telephone.

## Data collection

Twenty-two semi-structured, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews were executed by one of the researchers with more than 10 years' experience in nursing education and qualitative research. The semi-structured interview format was employed to foster dialogue between the researcher and the participant, enabling flexibility to adapt questions based on responses and to explore noteworthy and significant areas as they emerged (24). An interview guide (referred to as box 1) was created to encompass relevant subjects, although it didn't dictate the precise trajectory of each individual interview, thus allowing for a more natural and unrestricted flow. To aid in both data collection and analysis, the researcher maintained a reflective diary, documenting non-verbal cues at the conclusion of each interview. Participants were given the choice of interview settings to ensure a relaxed, informal ambiance, minimizing disturbances. For this purpose, a small, private interview room within the university premises was designated. Each interview was recorded with the participants' consent, and interview durations spanned from 15 to 30 minutes.

### Box 1: Interview guide

1. Most nursing students have had experience with the process of writing nursing care plans. What experiences have you had?
2. What kinds of impressions has this experience (these experiences) made on you? Please describe them.
3. What was it like when you had to write your first nursing care plan?
4. What did you experience during the process? After you had written it?
5. Do you discuss this experience with others? What is the discussion like? (If informants describe group interaction in development of nursing care plan, researcher will ask permission to be a participant observer.)
6. What is it like to write a nursing care plan now?
7. What do you experience during the process? After? Are you aware of differences in yourself as a result of this experience?
8. Are there things that make this experience a good one for you?
9. Are there things that make this a difficult experience for you?
10. What are your opinions about the process of developing and writing nursing care plans?
11. Is there anything you wish to add?

#### Probing questions

- "Can you explain it more?"  
"Can you give an example?"

## Data analysis

The methodology adopted for data analysis was qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is a research method that entails subjectively interpreting text through a structured coding procedure to reveal recurring themes or patterns (25). Following each interview, verbatim transcriptions of the content were generated. These transcripts underwent iterative readings to attain a comprehensive understanding aligned with the study's objectives. Initial codes and meaningful segments were subsequently identified by the research team and categorized based on shared attributes and distinctions. Rigorous review of these definitive codes ensued to ensure unanimity, with this iterative process refining until coherent themes emerged from the dataset. The data analysis was facilitated using the MAXDA10 program.

## Rigor

To fortify the study's rigor, the framework presented by Lincoln and Guba encompassing four criteria (dependability, credibility, conformability, and transferability) was employed (26). Credibility was fortified through sustained and thorough engagement with the data, thoughtful selection of key informants, and fostering close connections with participants. The researchers' adeptness in the realm of nursing enriched the identification of subtle nuances within participants' perspectives. Reflective practices, including journaling personal experiences and emotions, were embraced to counterbalance any potential internal biases. Ensuring conformability was achieved through the collective input of the research team during the data analysis phase. The dependability of the data analysis process was upheld through its transparent documentation. To address transferability, an all-encompassing depiction of the context and participants was meticulously provided (27). Furthermore, participants were involved by sharing transcripts and eliciting their feedback.

## RESULT

The nursing students' average age was  $22.55 \pm 0.96$  years, with 77% being female and 23% being male. Their grade point average was  $3.07 \pm 0.30$  and 59% of them chose the profession willingly. The participants' characteristics are listed in **Table 1**.

Coding and analysis of the data generated one theme, three subthemes, and six categories, as presented in **Table 2**. All in all, 614 primary codes related to the data were delineated, and the main theme was found to be "from a cocoon to a butterfly", whose subthemes will be explained in the following subsections.

**Table 1: The participant characteristics**

Participants	Sex	Age (Yr.)	Grade point average	willingness to choose the nursing
P1	Male	23	2.97	unwillingly
P2	Female	21	3.28	willingly
P3	Male	23	3.10	willingly
P4	Male	24	2.84	unwillingly
P5	Female	22	3.05	unwillingly
P6	Female	22	3.15	willingly
P7	Female	22	3.01	willingly
P8	Female	23	3.20	willingly
P9	Female	21	3.24	willingly
P10	Female	24	3.60	unwillingly
P11	Female	23	2.99	willingly
P12	Female	22	3.62	willingly
P13	Female	23	3.04	willingly
P14	Female	22	2.80	willingly
P15	Female	25	3.01	unwillingly
P16	Female	22	3.08	unwillingly
P17	Male	22	3.27	unwillingly
P18	Female	22	3.38	willingly
P19	Female	23	3.01	unwillingly
P20	Female	22	2.08	willingly
P21	Male	23	3.00	willingly
P22	Female	22	3.00	unwillingly

**Table 2: Main theme and related subtheme extracted from the students' experiences**

Themes	Subthemes	Categories	Subcategories
From A Cocoon To A Butterfly			
From A Hard Nut To Crack To A Piece Of Cake			
From A Hard Nut To Crack			
Time Consuming			
Overwhelming			
Box-Ticking			
To A Piece Of Cake			
Swift and Simple			
A-One-Of-A Kind-Task			
From Beginner To a Professional			
From Beginner			
Socially Inept			
Language Desert			
Passion Wilted			
To A Professional			
Maestro Of Mastery			
Graduated With Flying Colours			
Feeling Of Fulfilment			
Recommendations			
To Do List			
Approaching Bedside			
Getting Hands-On			
Timely Constructive Feedback			
Writing One With A Mentor			
Using Different Sources			

### From a hard nut to crack to a piece of cake

The primary subtheme that emerged from data analysis was "from a hard nut to crack to a piece of cake." This subtheme encompasses several categories, including "from a hard nut to crack" with subcategories of "time-consuming," "overwhelming," and "box-ticking," as well as "to a piece of cake" with subcategories of "swift," "simple," and "a-one-of-a kind-task." These subthemes will be explained in the following section.

**From a hard nut to crack:** Most students' first experience with writing nursing care plan as an assignment was exhausting because they found it time-consuming, overwhelming, and considered it as mere box-ticking."

### Time consuming

Most of the students said that at first this assignment was very time consuming. One student (P3) expressed their perspective on this matter: "In the beginning, it takes a long time, for example, preparing a care plan used to take me a week, I was trying to prepare it in great detail. At that time, it was difficult and stressful for me, you know." Or another student (P9) said: "You try to participate in care activities, but for the care plan, I also need to constantly go and collect data. it's time-consuming."

### Overwhelming

Almost all students explained that this assignment was overwhelming as their first experience. On this matter, a student (P10) shared: "There are also negative aspects. Sometimes it feels like a workload. The challenging part, is dealing with it during exam week. You have to study for the exam and manage it. Generally, we leave it until the end. We don't do it in the beginning, and when it's left to the last week, the workload becomes excessive."

### Box-ticking

Some students think that these assignments are like paperwork, mandatory, and just like filling out a bunch of papers and checking boxes." A student (P1) described this experience as follows "There may have been negative experiences in my first two years. You know, it's not very beneficial when we're more focused on doing assignments rather than taking care of the patients, when we have this mind-set of just giving and completing assignments and taking notes. But in the last year, we move away from that mind-set."

**To a piece of cake:** After writing several nursing care plans and learning how to do it, this task became as easy as a piece of cake for students since they could complete it quickly and effortlessly, and think that this task is a-one-of-a kind-task.

### Swift and Simple

A student (P8) described this experience as follows: "I used to struggle a lot and find it difficult while preparing them before, but now I can prepare care plans more easily. It takes less of my time. I can accomplish higher-quality work in a shorter time frame. If I put in more effort, I can even improve further. Compared to before, I spend less time preparing them; for example, I no longer dedicate hours to it." Another one said: "As I mentioned, in the beginning, it used to take a long time because I struggled a lot. But now, as I said, if I sit down and I'm given a patient from scratch, I can easily prepare it within an hour. You actually learn the procedure of the care plan."

The following sentence highlight this category that mentioned by a student (P22): "Now it's easier because I've settled into it a bit more. For example, I know what aetiology is and what descriptive factors are. I'm more familiar with medical terminology, so it becomes easier."

### A-one-of-a kind-task

While most students initially thought that this assignment was redundant paperwork, they now feel that it has been very effective, and no other assignment can replace it in the last semester. In this regard a student (P16) said: "In my opinion, all nursing students should write this assignment multiple times during their four-year course. I believe that no other assignment can replace it because it truly transforms us into real nurses. By completing this assignment, we learn precisely how to systematically assess, diagnose, and care for patients. No other exercise can take its place."

### From beginner to a professional

The secondary subtheme that emerged from data analysis was "from beginner to a professional." This subtheme encompasses some categories, including "from beginner" with subcategories of "socially inept," "language desert," and "passion wilted," as well as "to a professional" with subcategories of "maestro of mastery," "graduated with flying colours," and "feeling of fulfilment." These subthemes will be explained in the following section.

From beginner: Writing the first care plan for students was very difficult because they were experiencing it for the first time and didn't have enough knowledge in this area. They felt socially inept, as if living in a language desert, and their passion wilted.

### Socially inept

The following sentences are examples of the challenges that students (P4) had experienced "There was anxiety and fear at first because I wondered if I had any deficiencies or if I would make a mistake. Since it was my first contact with the patient, and it was my first attempt at initiating communication, I was a bit nervous, to be

honest." Or another student (P16) said "I didn't know how to do it; it was very difficult to communicate with patients because I didn't even know what I was asking."

### Language desert

The following sentences are examples of statements made by students (P5): "After my communication improved, I started to understand in terms of knowledge. Initially, I would research each word by underlining it, so I struggled quite a bit." Or "Everything felt very foreign. There were so many terms I didn't know. I used to mix up aetiology, descriptive factors, and so on (P19)."

### Passion wilted

In this regard a student (P11) said: "So, we don't actually implement all the interventions we write for the patient there. I wondered why I chose this profession; it was so tough for me. I really struggled while writing."

To a professional: After writing some nursing care plans, almost all students feel competent in this task and have the feeling of mastery, graduating with flying colours, and fulfilment.

### Maestro of mastery

In this context, a student expressed (P2): "Now, I can prepare it in a more patient-specific way, and it's more systematic. Yes, I think I've improved quite a bit. We can easily create this care plan now, which is like the fruit of that past debate. We can now confidently place a nursing diagnosis or assessment without any hesitation." Or "Now, because I've gotten used to it, I can write it directly from my head, you know. I can directly find the appropriate diagnosis for my patient. I can plan the interventions (P18)." Or "I feel better now, as I said, the first one I did and the last one I did are very different. The last one makes me feel more confident (P5)."

### Graduated with flying colours

One of the best feelings these students had was a sense of graduated with flying colours. On this matter, a student (P12) shared: "As I mentioned, our knowledge has increased. I don't think we'll graduate aimlessly. I believe that what we learned, even if it was challenging for most of my friends, was sufficient. It was beneficial to me because I did it willingly and with passion." Or another student (P7) said "It's quite positive when we see the benefit and the effect on the patient from the care plans we implement. I feel like a nurse. It's more like, we're not students anymore, and we only have 1-2 months left. We feel like nurses now, heading towards nursing from being students."

### Feeling of fulfilment

One of the pleasant experiences of the students was feeling of fulfilment. In this regard a student said (P6): "You know, seeing the patient's progress, like after applying, let's say, anxiety—we say the anxiety score



will decrease, and it does. It feels good, observing it in the patient and seeing that it works." Or another student (P13) said "For example, the patient had pain. The patient's pain is gone, but there was a problem with the sleep pattern. That has improved. The patient had an ineffective airway, for example, and that's gone, improved. Seeing these things makes us happy." Or another one (P14) mentioned: "Honestly, I felt good. You know, there's a sense of accomplishment, and now I have a plan that's tailored to my patient. I usually do it myself; I mean; I write it myself."

### Recommendations

The last subthemes that emerged from data analysis was "recommendations" for writing nursing care plan that suggest some applicable solution for writing a nursing care plan that will be explained in the following section.

### Approaching bedside

In this regard, students suggested several ways to make this journey easier. One of them was approaching bedside. In this regard a student (P17) shared: "I don't know, it could be an assignment like this, where we can do more bedside visits. Because they really benefit us. We learn how to examine the patient, how to approach them, and what questions to ask. For example, when we go to the patient's bedside, some long-term staying patients don't want us to touch them. That's why I think bedside visits are very beneficial for us in terms of examination or knowledge."

### Getting hands-on

Another practical suggestion for navigating this journey that was suggested by nursing students was getting hands-on. In this regard a student (P20) suggested: "Another thing that can be done is maybe creating a care plan based on a case in the hospital. Like a case discussion as a new example. They all have it, mental health is different, children are different, surgery is different. So, I think discussing it with the teacher and students in groups at the patient's bedside is more effective and more educational."

### Timely constructive feedback

The students suggested that these nursing care plan are very effective if the teacher provide them with timely constructive feedback: In this regard a student (P18) said: "We used to write these assignments initially, but we didn't receive proper feedback. We didn't know where we wrote correctly and where we made mistakes. In my opinion, instructors should individually address each of us and provide timely and constructive feedback on these matters."

### Writing one with a mentor

Almost all student said that they encounter problem in writing the first assignment and recommended to write the first one with a mentor. In this domain a student

(P9) said that: "For the first time, we didn't have any idea how to do this assignment. It was very demanding. I didn't know how to write; I just copied some paragraphs from Google to complete this task. But, in my opinion, a teacher, mentor, or senior student should help us in writing the first assignment."

### Using different sources

In this regard students suggest using human and non-human sources to write the nursing care plan. For example, a nursing student (P21) expressed: "Yes, especially I consult my friends. Instead of bothering my first teachers or professors, I usually ask my friends or the nurse sisters here. I seek support in areas I don't know. So, as I mentioned, if there's a different god, I first go and ask the nurse sister." Or "For topics I'm not familiar with, I conduct literature searches. Usually, I read sample cases from the literature and learn how to do it after that (P15)" Or another one said: "But, as I mentioned, we have internet pages and our books. We have nursing diagnosis books, and I use them. Now, writing a care plan is easy, very easy, it has really become easier (P8)."

### Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the experience of nursing students in writing nursing care plan in Konya, Turkey. The findings of this study shed light on the transformative journey of nursing students as they progress from novices to skilled care planners, a process that aligns with Patricia Benner's Novice to Expert Model (28). The study identified two primary subthemes: "From a hard nut to crack to a piece of cake" and "From beginner to a professional," as well as a set of recommendations for writing nursing care plans. These subthemes and recommendations provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by nursing students during writing nursing care plan as an assignment and the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges. Our results showed that students in the nursing care planning writing process are like caterpillars that need to emerge from their cocoon, and this process will assist them in breaking free from it.

The subtheme of "From a Hard Nut to Crack to A Piece of Cake" is prominently evident in the narratives shared by the students. It means that initially, writing these assignments was very difficult and exhausting for them, but after practicing and repeating this task several times, it became very easy and even productive for them. These findings align with the results of Lotfi et al.'s (2021) study, which emphasizes the significance of empowering nursing students in their educational journey. This empowerment plays a crucial role in enabling them to effectively apply the nursing process in their practical work (29). Moreover, it's interesting to note that our findings also resonate with the findings of Yildiz and Ceyhan's study (2023), which indicates that nursing students exhibited high to excellent levels of attitudes

towards nursing diagnoses. This suggests a positive disposition among students towards the nursing process and its related aspects (30). Taken together, these observations underscore the importance of providing nursing students with the necessary support and education to navigate the challenges they face in their training. It also highlights the potential positive impact on their readiness to apply their knowledge and skills in clinical practice.

The majority of students in the study transitioning from beginner to professional levels in writing the nursing process, echoing similar findings in Pozam (2022) and Üçkardeş's (2021) studies, which highlight senior students' higher knowledge and competencies in this area (31, 32). This progression underscores the effectiveness of nursing education curricula and suggests that accumulated knowledge and clinical exposure over the years contribute to enhanced competence, potentially benefiting patient care and outcomes. It also emphasizes the need for ongoing assessment and adaptation in nursing education programs to stay aligned with evolving healthcare practices.

Recommendation was the last subtheme suggested by students to navigate through this process. They highly recommended getting hands-on, approaching the bedside, receiving timely constructive feedback, writing with a mentor, and using different sources. These recommendations align with prior research, particularly Amouzeshi et al. study (2015), which advocated for integrated teaching methods in nursing education (33). Furthermore, Yilmaz et al.'s (2019) study highlighted the effectiveness of interactive teaching techniques like role-playing and case studies in teaching nursing diagnoses, resonating with the students' suggestions (34). The qualitative study by Burucu et al. (2021) further supported the positive impact of case-based learning integrated into the nursing process, emphasizing its role in enhancing the learning experience (35). This collective evidence underscores the importance of student input and innovative teaching methods in nursing education, ultimately enhancing students' abilities to excel in writing the nursing process. These recommendations reflect the students' desire for a more structured and supportive learning environment that fosters their growth as care planners. Additionally, the utilization of other sources, such as consulting peers, conducting literature searches, and referring to nursing diagnosis books, demonstrates students' resourcefulness in enhancing their knowledge and skills.

### Strength and limitations

The limited sample size employed in this descriptive phenomenological study is deemed appropriate; nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that the viewpoints and understandings expressed by the interviewees cannot be generalized to encompass the

entire population of nursing students. However, despite the aforementioned limitation, this study effectively depicted and elucidated nursing students' experiences in writing nursing care plans, marking the first qualitative study of its kind conducted within the context of Turkish nursing schools.

## CONCLUSION

Caterpillar-like, our findings reveal that nursing students are undergoing a transformative process in their care planning writing. Initially daunting and time-consuming, this phase can be quite disheartening. However, as they progress, they emerge like fully-fledged butterflies, experiencing the satisfaction and professional contentment that comes with it. In conclusion, this study delves into the journey of nursing students as they transition from struggling novices to proficient care planners. The recommendations provided by the students offer valuable guidance for nursing educators and institutions seeking to improve the care planning curriculum. Understanding the transformation process of nursing students is essential for curriculum development and enhancing the overall quality of nursing education. By implementing the recommendations offered by students and providing them with the necessary support and feedback, nursing programs can better prepare future nurses for the demands of their profession. Ultimately, this study highlights the resilience and adaptability of nursing students as they navigate the complexities of care planning. It reinforces the idea that with the right support, education, and experience, students can evolve into competent and confident healthcare professionals, capable of delivering high-quality patient care.

## ETHICAL DECLARATIONS

**Ethics Committee Approval:** Ethics Committee for Health Sciences Scientific Research at Necmettin Erbakan University (Decision No.2022/370, ID:12767, Date: 08.02.2023).

**Informed Consent:** All patients signed the free and informed consent form.

**Referee Evaluation Process:** Externally peer-reviewed.

**Conflict of Interest Statement:** The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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**Author Contributions:** All of the authors declare that they have all participated in the design, execution, and analysis of the paper, and that they have approved the final version.



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