





Metaphorical Perceptions of the Concept of "Game" from the Perspective of Students Studying in the Department of Recreation

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ABSTRACT

Play is not just a form of entertainment and leisure activity; it is also one of the most important tools for socialization. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to reveal how students in the recreation department conceptualize their thoughts on "play" through metaphors. The study utilized qualitative research methods and employed a phenomenological design. The study group was selected using purposive sampling and determined through the convenience sampling technique. The study group consists of 32 students aged between 18-34 who are studying in the recreation department. Participants were asked one metaphor question. The findings revealed that the metaphors related to the concept of recreation included categories such as psychological well-being, learning by doing, fun, necessity, teamwork, socialization, time management, communication, and freedom. As a result, the concept of play was perceived by recreation students under various metaphorical categories as a multifaceted phenomenon that provides happiness, emphasizes the sense of pleasure, is considered necessary for making life livable, and is energizing.

Keywords: Game, Metaphor, Qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Although the texts written throughout history are shaped by the influence of historical and cultural differences, they all state that the game has a history as old as humanity. The studies of archaeologists have also supported this situation and revealed how old games and toys are. It has been scientifically proven that many games known today date back to ancient times (Aral et al., 2000).

From the past to the present, people have brought many events, situations, substances and concepts to life by learning through imitation. Many things that people have done unconsciously or

unconsciously by seeing, telling or telling each other with their experiences have led to the beginning of game activities. For example, a person who hunts has taught this hunting method to those who follow him through imitation, and this process has become a game and formed a beginning. Children who imitated hunting turned this activity into a game and passed it from generation to generation and from period to period. This has been a turning point for the games played (Yaşar, 2021).

Play has had an important place throughout history as an integral part of human culture. Man is a social being by nature. It can be said that play is one of the most important tools that enable human socialization. Play assumes important functions not

only for individuals but also for society (Zou et al., 2021). From the individual's point of view, play plays a major role in helping people get to know life, society, the world, things, rules and behaviours, and learn principles and forms that require practice (Koyuncu et al., 2024). This process contributes significantly to the individual becoming a member of society. In terms of society, play supports socialization with functions such as order, harmony, solidarity and division of labour, and contributes to the continuity of society by gaining new members (Soyoo et al., 2024). Play contributes to the development of individuals at both individual and social levels by encouraging their creativity, problem-solving skills and empathy. At the same time, play, combined with physical activity, becomes an important tool that increases the health and welfare level of individuals (Dinç et al., 2019). In today's societies, the continuation of play habits that start in childhood in adulthood has positive effects on physical, mental and emotional health as well as strengthening the social bonds of individuals.

Play is not only an entertainment and leisure activity, but also one of the most important means of socialization. From childhood to adulthood, individuals not only have fun through play, but also develop their social, cognitive and emotional skills (Smith & Jones, 2022). Play enables individuals to gain a place in the community, develop empathy and learn to cooperate within the group. These interactions, which form the basis of social relationships, strengthen individuals' sense of belonging and contribute significantly to the development of communication skills. Group games encourage acting towards common goals and understanding different perspectives, allowing individuals to better understand both their own roles and the contributions of others (Beşikçi et al., 2021).

The history of play, which is generally seen as an entertainment and leisure activity in daily life, is as old as humanity and its function is known to be wide enough to cover individual and social life (Özbey et al., 2018). Historical processes, scientific research and individual observations clearly show that play is a necessity of human nature (Koral & Alptekin, 2023). What changes over time is how and what is played with; games and toys have always existed. For this reason, one of the answers given to the question of what human beings are is that human beings are "Homo Ludens" (Playing Human). In other words, play is not only an individual and conscious choice, but also the result of a natural need. It contributes to the socialization of man, who is a social being, and the acquisition of an objective dimension to this sociality (Vatandas, 2020).

Play has had an important place in the lives of individuals since the beginning of human history. It is one of the indispensable moments for everyone from children to adults. Individuals of all ages turn to play from time to time to meet their different expectations. Even though it is played by adults, play is generally associated with children. To define it simply, play is an activity to get pleasure, to be happy and to utilise free time. In this direction, the aim of the research is to reveal how students studying in the department of recreation conceptualize their thoughts about "play" through metaphors.

METHOD

Research Model

In this qualitative research, it was aimed to examine how students studying in the Department of Recreation conceptualize their thoughts about "play" through metaphors from the perspective of students studying in the Department of Recreation. In the research, qualitative research method was used and phenomenology-phenomonology design was used (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). This approach was adopted because the common points of the events subject to the research were tried to be defined, understood and described in depth.

Study Group

The study group of the current research was selected by purposive sampling method. In this direction, the study group of the research was determined by 'convenience sampling' technique within the framework of purposeful sampling method. The study group of the research consists of 32 people studying at Manisa Celal Bayar University, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Department of Recreation.

Data Collection Tools

In the study, a demographic information form regarding personal information (gender, age, grade, etc.) and a semi-structured metaphor form prepared by the researcher were used as data collection tools.

The metaphor question posed to the participants;

1. If you were to liken the concept of game to an animate or inanimate object, what would you liken it to?

The game is like Because;.....
Complete the sentence.

Example; The game is like a bird chirping for me. Because it relaxes and rests me. I am very happy

when I play games, I feel peaceful. I get rid of all the tiredness of the day I live, it gives me joy. I socialize when I play games.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and content analyses were used in the study. In the research, descriptive analysis was used to examine and compare the themes by creating codes from the data obtained through semi-structured interview questions determined by the researcher. Since new themes were obtained from the answers given by the participants participating in the research, content analysis was used.

In order to ensure the confidentiality of the participants during the analysis process, the participants were coded as "T1, T2, T3....T32" instead of their real names. In the analysis of the data, the data were coded and themes were found in the first stage by 3 academicians who are experts in the field and qualitative research. After the analyses, the codes and themes were modelled and the stage of defining and interpreting the findings was started.

Validity-Reliability

In order to ensure the internal validity of the research, the participants were interacted with during the data collection process. At the end of the interviews, the data were shown to the experts. In order to avoid inaccuracies and deficiencies, they were checked and participant confirmation was obtained. Sample selection was made for the purpose, care was taken in the data collection process, the processes and results of the research were described in detail and external validity was ensured.

RESULTS

Findings related to the personal information of the participants;

Some information about the participants who participated in the study is given below. The study group of the research consists of a total of 32 participants, 11 female and 21 male. It is seen that the participants, whose age range is 18-24, are studying in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades of the recreation department. In the personal information form, it was seen that 81,25% of the participants answered yes and 18,75% of the participants answered partially in the answers to the question "Do you like to play games?".

Figure 1. Findings related to the game phenomenon;



As a result of the analysis of the data obtained, in Figure 1, psychological well-being (P3, P6, P7, P9, P13, P15, P17, P19, P20, P23, P24, P27, P29), learning by doing (P1, P2, P19, P32), The codes of fun (P4), need (P5, P8, P11, P12, P21, P30), teamwork (P10), socialisation (P14), time management (P16, P25, P28, P31), communication (P18) and freedom (P22, P26) were found.

Participants were asked * Game It's like. Because?" Some of the participant opinions regarding the codes obtained from the participants regarding the question "Complete the sentence" and indicated in Figure 1 are given below. P3: Play is like energy. Because being energetic while playing a game makes it possible to pass the time in a better quality and enjoy the game more.

P4: Play is like a child. Because having fun is in the child's nature.

P6: Play is like happiness. Because every minute I play gives me pleasure and makes me very happy.

P10: The game is like a source of entertainment with a group for me. Because there is nothing better than having fun with my friends collectively.

P11: Play is like sleep. Because it is a need.

P14: Play is like a newborn baby for me. Because I have 8-month-old twins and every time I see them, I relieve my stress with the games we play and socialise through games. Seeing them happy makes me peaceful.

P18: Play is like learning. Because it expresses communication.

P26: Play is like a bird. Because I am free like birds.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the study conducted to analyse the perceptions of university students about the concept of 'game', it was revealed that university students created different metaphors for the concept of game. When the categories of the metaphors created for the concept of game are examined, it is seen that psychological well-being, learning by doing, entertainment, need, teamwork, socialisation, time management, communication and freedom.

Çakaroğlu & Ömür (2020), in their study conducted with 141 people to examine the metaphors related to the concept of play, concluded that play is a need. Çakmak et al. (2015) stated that play is as important a need as sleep and nutrition. Koç (2020) examined the metaphorical perceptions of university students towards the concept of physical education and concluded that physical education is a need like eating and drinking to maintain a healthy life and directs people to recreational activities through competitions and games.

As a result of the metaphor study conducted by Tok (2018), metaphors such as the game having a relaxing feature, giving happiness, reflecting life and being a need overlap with the findings obtained from this study. Therefore, it is possible to say that play is an important need in life for children and adults. Özdemir & Ramazan (2012) emphasised in their study that play is a means of entertainment for children and adults. Pilten & Pilten (2013) state that individuals consider entertainment as the main criterion when deciding whether an activity is a game or not. Roset et al. (2019), in a study investigating the effects of games on young people, concluded that it helps individuals to create a free environment and to improve themselves by getting rid of the usual flow of life and contributes to social development. Yılmaz et al. (2017), in a study on physical education course, concluded that the game helps individuals' physical development, increase their mental abilities and socialise.

It can be said that the results of these studies are similar to the findings of the current study. It has been concluded that individuals who play sports and games are psychologically relaxed, happier, their adaptation to life increases and they get away from stress (Sharma et al., 2009; Zuckerman et al., 2020). Çakaroğlu & Ömür (2020) concluded that the game is an important learning tool in the lives of individuals as a result of evaluating the meanings they attributed to the game.

Tuğrul (2012) states that the game is both a natural and structured learning environment that offers rich learning opportunities to individuals. Groos's (1901) acquisition of skills and knowledge seen as preparation for adult life also overlaps with Bandura's (1986) Social Learning Theory and Vygotsky's (1967) Socio-Cultural Development Theory. In this direction, it is possible to say that the game is an important learning tool in the lives of individuals. Savaş et al. (2021) stated that the innovations, methods and techniques, and tools brought by the game learning approach not only fulfil functions such as attracting attention, motivation, effective and permanent learning for the new generation, but also support skills such as learning by doing and teamwork. Kıran et al. (2019), in their study investigating the time management skills of university students according to their activity status, found that doing physical activity positively affects time management skills. Arcan (2021), in his study examining the metaphorical perceptions of university students towards the concepts of game and physical activity, concluded that the game is mostly perceived as a means of education and training, a way of expressing emotions and a source of need. This perception shows how important the game is in terms of both individual development and social interaction and communication. In addition, it is possible to say that the communication skills gained through games benefit individuals in the process of establishing social relationships (Selçuk & Akdağ, 2020).

Within the scope of the research, data were collected in 9 conceptual categories with 32 different metaphors. As a result, the concept of play was perceived by the students of the recreation department under various metaphorical categories as a phenomenon that provides happiness to the individual, is versatile, brings the sense of pleasure to the fore, is thought to be necessary to make life livable and energising.

It is seen that the metaphors obtained overlap with game theories. As seen in this research, it can be said that the concept of game is an important factor. In order to better understand the concept of game, it is recommended to take the results of evaluation in applied activities. In addition, it is recommended to expand the study group and to carry out metaphorical studies on the concept of game with recreation department students in different universities.

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