



The Freedom Perception of Imprisoned Children: Ankara Case*

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ABSTRACT

Understanding and analysing the metaphors of children sentenced to prison or reformatory will contribute to their more rapid rehabilitation and re-integration into society. This study aimed to provide the perception of freedom of these children using metaphors. The study group was consisted with 53 imprisoned children in Ankara (12-18 years old). The data was obtained via a structured interview form. The first part of the form consisted of questions to obtain personal information about the children. In the second part of the form, the children were asked to use metaphors to describe their perception of freedom, prison and life outside the prison. Content analysis technique was used to analyse the data. The study is important not only in terms of reflecting children's views about life inside and outside the prison but also for understanding the children rehabilitation in prisons. In the end of the study, it was determined that the participants produced interesting metaphors about the concept of freedom. It is noteworthy that the metaphors created are generally related to the psychological, social and economic situations of the participants. The study is also important in that it reflects the participants' views on life in and out of prison. The purpose of this research was to increase the information concerning children involved in crime and suggest ways of rehabilitating them more quickly.

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1. Introduction

Juvenile delinquency has a different background than adult delinquency. For this reason, not only the legally, but also the psycho-socially are handled differently from adults. The issue of juvenile delinquency should be considered together with risk factors for children. In order to prevent children from succumbing, it is required to solve their problems like poverty, substance dependence, living and working on the streets, leaving school. According to findings on the situation of children, juvenile delinquency should be handled as a social/social policy issue rather than criminological problem (Çoban, 2015).

1.1. Child Delinquency

The concept of crime is as old as the history of humanity and it will endure as the world exists. When a crime is committed by a minor, it is described as juvenile delinquency (Bayındır et al., 2007: 95). Socio-economic developments in the 18th century and its impact on the family should be related to the

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understanding of the sources of juvenile delinquency (Menzel, 1983). The Industrial Revolution had adverse influence on the care and treatment of children. Similarly, the two World Wars in the 20th century also had a negative impact on the lives of children (Fişek et al., 2008: 18). The first mention of child (or juvenile) delinquency as a child that has gone astray was in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child (commonly known as the Declaration of Geneva) in 1924.

Neglected and guilty children require special attention. Their behaviour should be viewed as an environmental stimulant, not an innate disorder. There were serious concerns about the placement of children convicted of crime with adult offenders. With this reason, private institutions were formed for the guilty children. These institutions were called refugee houses and reform schools from the 19th century onward (Menzel, 1983).

Many studies have researched the correlation between child delinquency and certain factors such as morals, socioeconomic level, school, peers, family and migration (Avcı, 2008: 50). The biological and physiological disadvantages and illnesses of a child can be considered individual triggers rather than social initiators. In addition to individual triggers, social factors such as a low socioeconomic status, negative influence of peers, violence in family, divorced parents and loss of family lead children to crime (O'Connell, 2011). It is also common that children who get used to drugs commit offences to obtain these drugs (Ögel & Aksoy, 2007: 12).

Child delinquency has a background different from adult delinquency and has to be examined not only legally but also psychosocially. The age of criminal liability differs throughout the world. For example, in Scotland, when a child under 16 commits a crime, they are called child delinquents. The term juvenile delinquent refers to offenders aged between 16 and 20 and an adult delinquent is someone over 20 that has been involved in crime. In France, an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child and abatement is offered for children that have committed a crime. In the United States of America, the upper age limit of criminal responsibility is 18, but over 7, children are considered delinquents. This shows that regulations vary according to different cultural, political and judicial structures of the countries. In Turkey, a quasi-Scottish system has been implemented. Under the Turkish law, a child is a person under the age of 18. Child delinquency and the punitive measures are taken considered according to the following child's age: 0-12, 12-15 and 15-18 years (Göç, 2006: 8-9).

Child delinquency is one of the most important social problems in many parts of the world. Academic studies on juvenile delinquency can be seen from the beginning of the 20th century. Burgess (1916) examined 52 children who had been transferred to the Juvenile Court in a rural American city of 12,000 inhabitants. Burgess pointed out that it is more difficult to change children's criminal behaviour because of the traditional understanding in rural areas and the lack of social workers.

In Turkey, most of the crimes committed by children are offenses against property such as theft and pickpocketing (Ministry of Justice, 2014a). These offenses are commonly seen in families with low socioeconomic and economic status and as a result of rural-urban migration (Kunt, 2003: 33). According to the Ministry of Justice (2014b) (Table 1), in 2014, 165.189 children stood trial, of whom 31.117 were acquitted, 54.121 were sentenced to prison, and the remaining children (79.951) were convicted of different crimes and received different punishments (e.g., community service). There is also a constant increase in the number of crimes committed by children.

In Turkey, there has been a significant move to educate and rehabilitate the children involved in crime. For this purpose, these children are allowed to work part time in the custodial institution in order that they can acquire some occupational skills. These children are also encouraged to engage in sports to develop healthier habits (Yavuzer, 2011: 277). The rules and conditions of reformatories are different from juvenile prisons. The main objective of reformatories is to educate and rehabilitate these children and prevent their further criminal behaviour. In Turkey, there are reformatories in the provinces of Ankara, İzmir and İstanbul. These centres are like dormitories, in which some children receive training for a day, and for the rest of the week, they are allowed to work in appropriate places outside the

reformatory. Moreover, some children can study for university entrance exams and enrol in courses to progress in their formal education.

Table 1. Number of judicial decisions in juvenile delinquency cases in Turkey (2004-2014)

Year	Convicted	%	Acquitted	%	Other judgements	%	Total
2004	8 031	23.8	3 314	9.8	22 375	66.4	33 720
2005	18 859	33.9	2 437	4.4	34 340	61.7	55 636
2006	5 155	8.3	5 707	9.2	51 299	82.5	62 161
2007	12 377	24.2	8 137	15.9	30 691	59.9	51 205
2008	15 058	25.9	9 414	16.2	33 621	57.9	58 093
2009	24 205	26.5	15 660	17.2	51 328	56.3	91 193
2010	24 785	28.3	16 586	18.9	46 287	52.8	87 658
2011	28 306	26.8	21 158	20.0	56 275	53.2	105 739
2012	32 294	27.1	25 718	21.6	61 029	51.3	119 041
2013	44 352	29.4	30 382	20.1	76 179	50.5	150 913
2014	54 121	32.8	31 117	18.8	79 951	48.4	165 189
2015	52 314	35,6	27 126	18,5	67 331	45,9	146 711

Source: Ministry of Justice, (2015b).

1.2. Freedom

Freedom is an abstract concept that varies from person to person. It affects human life and behaviour and cannot be reduced to certain definitions. Although the concept of freedom is a common research area in philosophy, sociology, criminology, psychology, economics and administrative sciences, it has a special significance for education. However, freedom relates to morals and religion since it is connected to human behaviour in society. Freedom varies from person to person as do other values.

In the Ancient Greece, the concepts of freedom and equality were underestimated in most philosophical discussions. In this period, a collective goodness, virtue and happiness were considered significant and people discussed how the state could lead its people to these values. Therefore, individual freedoms were not as important as the collective freedom (Tannenbaum & Schultz, 2012: 59; Er 2009; Adugit 2013). This was the same in the Roman Age, in which philosophers referred to the concepts of natural law, wellness of society, ideal state, virtue and happiness rather than individual freedom. Following the adoption of Christianity and the rise of the church, worldly freedom became less and less important (Tannenbaum & Schultz, 2012).

The most important changes in the perceptions of individual freedom were seen before and during the Renaissance. Machiavelli marked the age with his mindfully thoughts about freedom. After Machiavelli, people started to believe that individuals must be liberated from the pressure and limitations of the state and church. This belief stemmed mostly from the developments in science and technology. With these new developments, people started to believe that the true knowledge could only be learned from the church or kings. Machiavelli focused on the independence and intellectual freedom of individuals making a distinction between the private and the public. Thus, the concept of freedom started to take its modern shape. From the Renaissance period to the 19th century, individual rights developed only in part. In the 19th century, John Stuart Mill profoundly influenced the discussions on freedom and the individual and contributed to the formation of concepts such as the freedom of press, freedom of debate and women's liberation (Mill, 2000).

The discussions of these philosophers led to the classification of freedom and the acknowledgment of the rights of the discriminated segments of society (such as women and minorities). Therefore, the 19th century can be considered a milestone in the history of enlightenment and intellectual developments. Hegel was a philosopher who greatly focused on freedom even stating that world history is nothing but the history of freedom. On the other hand, he placed limitations on freedom and tried to put it into formal moulds (Özdemir, 2013). Marx considered freedom in social terms. He placed emphasis on the position of freedom in relation to society and the individual considering freedom to be

an upper-structure. For Sartre, within his existentialist philosophy, freedom is a matter of existence and human beings are as free as their will and passions allow (Adugit, 2013).

In the 20th century, Isaiah Berlin, a social and political theorist, made a distinction between negative and positive freedoms (Berlin, 1969). Negative freedom means that an individual has free will and the freedom of choice. An individual is free in their behaviour and cannot be constrained by others. Positive freedom, on the other hand, is related to the social and political side of freedom and individuals' rights. Amartya Sen, one of the most important philosophers of our age, focused on social preferences in relation to freedom (Sen, 2000: 17). Another 20th century philosopher was John Rawls engaged in research into theories of justice. He considered that everybody must have equal rights in terms of achieving freedom (cited in Ergüngör, 2010: 165).

Throughout the history, the perceptions of freedom of both individuals and governments have significantly changed. World wars and social and political events have influenced the idea of freedom in both positive and negative ways. At present, many countries are governed by democratic regimes. Democracy guarantees freedoms. In these regimes, people can socially react when their freedom is constrained.

Examining the way concepts are perceived by individuals is important in terms of revealing the mental structures of individuals. In our country, many studies have been conducted on children's value orientations (Yiğittir & Öcal, 2010). The concept of freedom is worth examining because it is both a value and a phenomenological object. Especially, revealing the metaphors of children in prison regarding a concept that has been discussed throughout history, such as freedom, has been deemed necessary in terms of both being for the best interests of the child and having the potential to form a basis for future studies.

1.3. Purpose

There have only been a few studies about children who are imprisoned. The purpose of this research was to increase the information concerning children involved in crime and suggest ways of rehabilitating them more quickly. The current study aims to offer an understanding of the perception of freedom of children who have been constrained through the legal system.

2. Method

2.1. Model

A phenomenon is a fact or an event in life that can be experienced or perceived. The current study is based on a phenomenological approach, which investigated how the participants perceived and conceptualized the phenomenon of freedom (Greasley & Ashworth, 2007; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005; Akturan & Esen, 2008; Arastaman et al., 2020). The characteristic feature of phenomenology is that it tries to make sense of lived experience. This focused phenomenon can be a concept, a thought or an emotion. In this study, it was examined how the personal experiences and characteristics of the participants shaped their perceptions of freedom.

2.2. Participants

All the participants were under the age of 18 and had been sentenced to either juvenile prison or reformatory. Permissions required to conduct the study were obtained from the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Turkey. The participants were 53 children under the age of 18, 24 of whom were from Sincan Juvenile Prison and 29 were from a child reformatory in Ankara. All children are male. As a working group, it is presumed that children in prison are elected because these children can impose different meanings on the concept of freedom. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. Most of the participants (46) were aged 16 or 17. Six children were aged 14 or 15 and only one child was from the 12-13 age group. Except for three participants, all children's parents were alive and the parents of 12 children were

divorced. Nearly half the parents were primary school graduates, and 10 mothers and 8 fathers were illiterate. None of the parents graduated from university.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Age	Education level		Parent situation		Parents' educational status				
	f	f	Mother	Father	Mother	Father			
12-13	1	Illiterate	2	Alive	52	51	Illiterate	10	8
14-15	6	Literate	2	Dead	1	2	Literate	6	1
16-17	46	Primary school	15	Divorced	12	12	Primary school	28	25
18-	-	Secondary school	34				Secondary school	5	13
							High school	4	6
Total			53						

As for the educational status of children, 2 were illiterate, 15 were primary school graduates, 34 were secondary school graduates and 2 never went to school or dropped out before completing primary school. However, these drop-outs were somehow literate. More than half the participants had a job before imprisonment with most (17) being manual workers working in furniture shops, mechanics, bakers, shoemakers, barbers, plumbers, blacksmiths and electricians.

2.3. Data Collection

Data was obtained through open-ended questions. From the review of the literature, the researchers and an expert in the field agreed on the following three open-ended questions to be used in this study to provide an understanding of the participant children's perception of freedom:

- ✓ Which object would you use to describe freedom? Why?
- ✓ Which object would you use to describe prison? Why?
- ✓ Which object would you use to describe the life outside the prison? Why?

The children were asked to explain their choice of metaphors for an easier interpretation. The data was gathered between October 2014 and February 2015. The researcher explained to the children that participation in the study was voluntary. The face-to-face interviews took place in places permitted by prison/reformatory administration. Each interview lasted 15 to 20 minutes and the researcher noted children's responses.

2.4. Analysis of Data

In phenomenological studies, data analysis aims to analyse an event or the interpretation of an event. In this study, the data was analysed using a content analysis method, and based on this, descriptive themes and concepts were identified. The process of encoding is very important for the interpretation of the content (Punch 2005). Similar concepts come together forming categories. To protect the privacy of the children, the participants were given numerical codes from P1 to P53.

The data obtained in the study were analysed by 3 experts, one of which is a researcher. Then, according to the results of this analysis, the tables in the findings were obtained. Code names were used instead of the names of the participants. In order to reveal their perceptions of the freedom of the 12-18 year olds in prison with the help of metaphors, they were asked to produce metaphors(s) for each concept related to the concepts of "freedom, life in and outside prison" and to state their reasons for using these metaphors. Because the metaphor may not sufficiently show the ability to see the description alone. Participation approval was obtained from the participants. Each interview took place face-to-face for 15-20 minutes with the children in the study. In the Interviews House, a police officer was waiting in front of the door and the police officer could observe the interview without hearing via the windows. Their answers about the interview were taken to the study without any change.

3. Results

In this paper, the findings are presented in relation to the three research questions, concerning children’s perception of freedom, prison and life outside the prison. The metaphors used by the participants to explain their perception of these concepts were divided into five categories as being related to a person, animal, object, place or other (Table 3).

Table 3. Number of metaphors concerning of freedom, prison and life outside the prison

Concepts		Categories					Total
		Person	Animal	Object	Place	Other	
Freedom	Number of metaphors	5	3	11	6	4	29
	f	8	31	13	8	5	65
Prison	Number of metaphors	1	-	5	19	1	26
	f	1	-	15	39	1	56
Life outside the prison	Number of metaphors	7	2	10	7	4	30
	f	12	6	20	9	6	63

*Children responded with more than one metaphor

The concept of freedom was mostly described using metaphors related to animals (31), followed by an object (13), person (8) and place (8). The participants mostly used a place (39) or an object (15) to describe the concept of prison. Finally, metaphors related to life outside the prison were categorized into object (20), place (9), animal (9) and others (6).

3.1. Metaphors used for freedom

The participant children used 29 unique metaphors to describe the concept of freedom, which were grouped into five categories. There were 11 distinct metaphors in the object category, 5 in the person category, 3 in the animal category, 6 in the place category and 4 in the other category. Table 4 presents all the metaphors used by the participants by category.

Table 4. Categorical distribution of metaphors used for freedom

f	Categories				
	Person	Animal	Object	Place	Other
3	Civil servant	Bird	-	Sky	Love
2	Family		Car Computer Gold Water Money	Park	
1	New born baby Non-disabled person Police	Lion Cat	Tulum cheese [a local variety] Football Flower Kite without a string Cigarette Bag	Mountain World Home Night Stars	Heart A rare thing Anything beautiful
Total (f)	8	31	13	8	5

Eight children described the concept of freedom with a person; namely policeman, officer, new born baby, family or a non-disabled person. For example, P44, 18 and 22 compared freedom to a civil servant because civil servants can leave their workplace in the evenings and go to their homes. P39 thought of freedom as a person with no disability. P5 said that freedom was like a new born baby because only a new born baby could make a fresh start in life. P17 and P18 said that freedom is like family. When asked

why, A17 explained that they only felt free when they were with their families. A18 said that the reason for this was because his/her family was outside the prison. A21 had a different point of view about freedom and stated that freedom reminded him/her of a policeman because a policeman limited his/her freedom of using drugs.

There were 3 metaphors in the animal category. Thirty-one participants described freedom using bird, lion and cat as a metaphor. Some of the participants resembled the concept of freedom to a bird. The participants who resembled the concept of freedom to a bird explained their reasons in the following way. The birds can go to the sky without any obstacles and go to distant lands where their wings can take them and that the participants cannot go anywhere because they are in prison. Most children (29 participants) compared freedom to a bird and provided similar explanations for their choice of metaphor as seen in the following responses:

"Freedom is like birds outside. They can fly freely and go wherever they want. Now, I really appreciate the value of freedom" (P16).

"Freedom is like birds. I can see through the window how they fly freely" (P19).

"Freedom is like birds. Birds can fly freely outside" (P51).

Freedom was compared to a lion by one participant and to a cat by another. Most of the participants who used animal metaphors for freedom were from the reformatory.

In the object category, there were 11 metaphors which were used by 13 participants (bag, flower, gold, water, money, cheese, car, computer, kite without a string, cigarette, and football). Below are some excerpts from the responses of the participants:

"Freedom is like gold. It is as priceless as gold" (P13).

"Freedom is like a handbag. You are free to take your bag wherever you go" (P49).

"Freedom is like a flower because flowers are outside" (P50).

In the object category, children also referred to some unusual and irrelevant objects as follows:

"Freedom is like water/pool because we are free when we swim" (P23).

"Freedom is like money because spending money is freedom" (P44).

"Freedom reminds me of "tulum" cheese [a local variety of cheese] because I can eat it only when I am outside the prison" (P44).

"Freedom is like a car because with a car you can go wherever you want" (P16).

"Freedom is like a computer because I can use a computer freely when I am outside" (P4).

"Freedom is like a kite without a string because no one can hold it" (P6).

"Freedom is like a cigarette because I am not allowed to smoke here" (P8).

"Freedom is like a football because I miss playing football" (P12).

The place category contained the following six metaphors: mountain, park, sky, world and home. The participants explained their choice of metaphors as follows:

"Freedom is like a mountain because there is no obstacle in front of it" (P34).

"Freedom is like a park. Because park is a place where children can play freely" (P43).

"Freedom is like the sky because the sky cannot be imprisoned" (P45).

"Freedom is like the world because it moves freely" (P1).

"Freedom is like home because I feel free only when I am home" (P3).

"Freedom is like night and stars in the sky because I am deprived of seeing them for years" (P7).

Four metaphors, namely love, heart, a rare thing, and anything beautiful, could not be grouped into any of the four categories, so these are presented in the 'other' category. The participants explained these metaphors as follows:

"Freedom is like love because it is as priceless as love" (P32).

"Freedom is like maternal love because it is eternal" (P37).

"Freedom is like a heart because a heart can think freely" (P11).

"Freedom compares to nothing. It is unprecedented" (P2).

"Freedom is anything that is beautiful because freedom is beautiful" (P20).

3.2. Metaphors used for prison

Prisons are institutions where criminals are rehabilitated and integrated into society. Therefore, imprisoned children's ideas regarding these institutions are important in order to understand whether these centres fulfil their mission and functions. Children used 26 metaphors to describe prison, which are presented in four categories in Table 5.

Table 5. Categorical distribution of metaphors used for prison

f	Categories			
	Place	Object	Pearson	Other
9	-	Cage		
8	Home			
7	Post office			
6	-			
5	School			
4	Grave			
3	-	Box		
2	Indoor space			
1	Asylum, cell, barn, hospital, dormitory, hotel, police station, derelict house, tent, horse farm, garbage dump, repair shop, desert island	Wardrobe, wall, kite	Friend	Nightmare
Total (f)	39	15	1	1

Eighteen metaphors used by 39 participants for prison were related to a place. Children associated prison with home, school, cemetery, asylum, hotel, dormitory, post office, cell, barn, indoor space, police station, derelict house, tent, horse farm, garbage dump, repair shop, desert, and island. It can be said that the fact that the participants were chosen randomly and that the personal characteristics, educational background, familial and environmental characteristics, and experiences they had in prison were effective in emphasizing the very different metaphors regarding the concept of prison. Prison was perceived as an ordinary place by some of the children for example, P1 stated, "Prison is like home because you are within the same walls". Similarly, P8 responded with, "Prison is like home because I get used to it and I feel at home." Examples of other metaphors used by children are as follows:

"Prison is like an asylum because we receive treatment here" (P9).

"Prison is like a post office because a post office preserves documents. The prison also protects us" (P15).

"Prison is like a tent because it is enclosed" (P34).

Children also compared prison to common areas such as schools, dormitories or hotels:

"Prison is like a school because there are activities and rules as in the school" (P5).

"Prison is like a hotel because it is predetermined how long you are going to stay" (P10).

"Prison is like a dormitory because there are activities here too and we stay in single rooms" (P14).

One child (P44) considered prison as an opportunity for occupational self-development stating, "Prison reminds me of a repair shop because I can learn a job here." However, some children had negative perceptions of prison. For example; "Prison is like a cemetery because we are dead here" (P7). "Prison is like a barn because animals are tethered and fed there [barn] as we are here [prison]" (P27).

In the object category, there are five metaphors used by 15 participants: cage, kite, box, wardrobe and wall. Below are some excerpts from the responses of the participants:

"Prison is like a cage. It has walls and is closed like a cage" (P2).

"Prison is like a cage because you can't go out" (P12).

"Prison is like a kite because somebody else holds your strings" (P6).

"Prison is like a box because we are nothing but dead people" (P11).

"Prison is like a wardrobe that is closed because they just put us in and out like clothes" (P13).

"Prison is like a wall because it is surrounded by walls" (P21).

One child described prison as a friend but not in a positive sense: "Prison is like a friend to me because my friends are bad". One metaphor, nightmare, could not be included in any of the four categories. This was used by P32 who commented, "Prison is like a nightmare because my freedom has been taken away."

3.3. Metaphors used by children for life outside the prison

In this study, children's conceptualization of freedom was also explored in terms of how they perceived life outside the prison. Children used 30 different metaphors to describe life outside the prison, which are presented under five categories (Table 6).

Table 6. Categorical distribution of metaphors used for life outside the prison

f	Categories				
	Place	Animal	Object	Person	Other
6	Family	-	-	-	-
5		-	Tree	-	-
4		Bird	Computer	-	-
3		-	-	-	-
2	Friend	Dog	Telephone, window, flower	Heaven, sun	Working Playing football
1	Guardian, Worker, Smiling person, art teacher, child		Pencil, kite, mirror, drugs, bus	Football pitch, room, sky, hell, road	dream, something different
Total (f)	13	6	20	9	6

The most outstanding metaphor is family. The seven metaphors in the "place" category were family, a friend, child, guardian, worker, smiling person, and art teacher. Children focused on the things they wished to do or had done outside the prison before their imprisonment. The fact that the participants primarily emphasize the concept of family when it comes to out-of-prison shows that the people/objects closest and dearest to them in the outside world are under the roof of the family.

Most participants commented on their longing for a free life as follows:

"Life outside the prison is like my family. Because I haven't seen them for a long time and I miss them" (P13).

"Life outside the prison is like my family because I only have my family outside" (P24).

"Life outside the prison is like guardians because they can go out in the evenings" (P15).

"Life outside the prison is like workers because they work outside" (P22).

"Life outside the prison resembles people that are smiling because these people are happy, they have the freedom of choice and are together with their families" (P41).

"Life outside the prison is like a girlfriend because I could hang out with my girlfriend outside" (P42).

"Life outside the prison is like a friend because freedom means hanging out with friends" (P43).

"Life outside the prison reminds me of my art teacher because I [would] always draw pictures with my teacher [when I was] outside."

The "animal" category contained two metaphors used by six participants regarding life outside the prison. Four participants compared it to birds since birds lived outside (P6, P11, P12 and P35). The remaining two participants used the metaphor of a dog for different reasons: "Life outside the prison is

like a dog because dogs always fight and I [would] always fight [when I was] outside" (P53). "Life outside the prison is like a dog because I miss my dogs" (P49).

The following ten metaphors used by 20 participants were included in the object category: window, phone, computer, pencil, kite, tree, mirror, drug, flower and bus. Children who used the computer metaphor further explained this by saying, "Outside, we can socialize using a computer" (P5) and "I can use a computer only when I am outside" (P21). Below are some other examples of the participants' responses:

"Life outside the prison is like a telephone because my only connection with outside is [through using] a telephone" (P3).

"Life outside the prison is like a window because it is the only thing I see of the outside world" (P2).

"Life outside the prison is like a pencil, because I use it to write down what I will do when I get out of here" (P8).

"Life outside the prison is like drugs because I [would] use drugs outside".

"Life outside the prison is like a bus [public transportation] because I can go to free life by bus."

In the place category, there were seven metaphors used by nine participants: turf, room, sky, heaven, hell, sun and road. Most children were positive when describing life outside the prison:

"Life outside the prison is like a room because outside, I have a room of my own" (P43).

"Life outside the prison is like the sky because the colour blue reminds me of a free life" (P51).

"Life outside the prison is like heaven because it is as beautiful as heaven" (P50).

"Life outside the prison is like the sun because the sun only rises outside" (P32).

One participant (P39) had a negative point of view about life outside the prison and therefore used the metaphor of hell explaining that he/she had experienced many problems outside.

Six participants used the following four abstract metaphors to describe life outside the prison: dream, working, playing football and something different. Below are some excerpts from the responses of the participants:

"Life outside the prison is like a dream because I can't feel its existence anymore" (P10).

"Life outside the prison is like working because I work outside" (P17).

"Life outside the prison is like football, because I played football only when I was outside" (P52).

"Life outside the prison is quite different because it is priceless" (P18).

4. Discussion

The current study aimed to provide an understanding of imprisoned children's perception of freedom. Understanding the world of thought of a child who has to stay in a prison is a subject that can attract the attention of many different disciplines.

Metaphors were questioned under the main concepts of freedom, prison and life outside prison. Children in prison produced a total of 29 different metaphors for the concept of "freedom". The metaphors produced were handled in 5 categories. Prisons are institutions that function to rehabilitate criminals and reintegrate them into society. Children in prison produced a total of 26 different metaphors for the concept of "prison". The metaphors produced were handled in 4 categories. Children in prison produced a total of 30 different metaphors for the concept of "life outside the prison". The metaphors produced were handled in 5 categories.

The metaphors used in the tools related to development in our study are the products they produce. So when they get to know about the economic situation. It is depicted that the education for the appearance in their language is depicted in the institution by the whole of their education at school. Their desire to have it again to have it before reveals how precious freedom is for them luxury is living freely in their little world. These children produced metaphors such as home, school, and dormitory. In addition, they were compared to their friend. These are the events that children associate with their bad

situation about the events they associate with their badness at school. The public bus, the mirrors, the computer examines this part of the dairy.

The current study aimed to provide an understanding of imprisoned children's perception of freedom. Although some studies have been carried out with imprisoned children to investigate the relation between forensic psychiatry and adolescence (Uygur, Türkcan & Geyran, 1994), explore the causes of child delinquency (Ovacık, 2008: 91) and review the conceptual definitions of child delinquency (Özalp, 2015), to our knowledge, there is little study about children's perception of freedom.

In his study, Ömür (2012) reported that preschool children perceived freedom as an opportunity to play games or spend time with their friends. Ömür (2012) conducted a study to examine the perceptions of freedom of children who received preschool education in the 2011-2012 academic year; however, the majority of students who grew up in families with low income levels did not have any idea about the concept of freedom; It has been determined that children with middle and high income levels and who grow up in a non-oppressive family environment have predictions and interpretations about freedom. In our study, there are findings in the same direction. Işık (2003), as a result of his research titled *The Effects of the Family on Juvenile Delinquency*, revealed that the majority of the children who commit crimes are primary school graduates, the economic and educational levels of their families are low, and the family and the conditions they are in are extremely important in the development of the child's delinquent personality. In our study, it was observed that the participants differed in terms of their personal characteristics.

Most of the children came from families with low socioeconomic status had no idea about freedom and those that were in better social and economic conditions had only limited ideas and interpretations about this concept. Similarly, in the current study, the metaphors were mostly related to the conditions in which they lived. For example; imprisoned children considered freedom as being outside the prison as opposed to pre-school children defining freedom as playing games.

Furthermore, according to Ömür (2012), the income level of children's family was also associated with children's perception of freedom. This is also in agreement with our results, which demonstrated that to refer to freedom, children mostly used objects with which they had contact in their lives outside. Therefore, it can be inferred that children's perception of freedom was affected by their socioeconomic status. Işık (2003) reported that children who had been involved in crime were mostly from families of low income and poor social and educational status. This shows that the social circumstances in which a child grows up has a significant impact on their propensity to criminal behaviour. In the current study, the participants came from different educational and social backgrounds and there was a clear relationship between the metaphors they used for freedom and their family structures. According to the Ministry of Justice, in recent years, the number of children who have been involved in various offenses has increased (Ministry of Justice, 2014a). It is possible for the participants, who come from different socio-economic environments and have different experiences, to think differently and have different metaphors even if they are in the same environment.

However, this situation can be attributed to our changing values, attitudes, expectations and tendencies. This is the same for both children and adults. In another study, opinions of Turkish and Lithuanian young people about freedom were examined comparatively. In this study, Öcal et al. (2020) stated that several cultural differences related to the reason of the importance of freedom value have been revealed. From the responses of children in the interviews, it is inferred that freedom means much more to these children than anybody else. For example, the use of civil servant as a metaphor to represent freedom indicates that the only expectation of these children is to be and live outside.

The bird metaphor is evidence that they wish to be free in our study. Comparing freedom to things such as cheese, football and flower shows that these children have simple and reasonable expectations from freedom; they only wish to do the things they did before their imprisonment. None of the children used a utopic or unrealistic metaphor for freedom. Furthermore, children's perception of prison differed

according to their value judgements and past lives. Children, who had been in poor conditions before imprisonment, considered prison a good place to be. These children chose metaphors such as home, school and dormitory to describe prison. Some children even compared it to a friend. However, there were more children who had a negative view about prisons. The metaphors used by these children include cage, barn, asylum and hell. It is quite normal that a place restricting someone's freedom is perceived in a negative way. But if life outside the prison is worse than the prison itself, then prison can be perceived as a better place.

5. Conclusion

Life outside the prison is as important as the prison itself for children. The free life beyond the prison walls is the dream of all imprisoned children. In this study, children described life outside the prison through their longings for travelling on a public bus, having a mirror, pencil, or computer. The children also had longings for their old ways of life which they associated with being in heaven. As stated above, the concept of freedom changes from one person to another. The norms, financial possibilities and social status can influence a person's expectations of freedom. There are differences in the perceptions of freedom among academicians, doctors, artists, politicians, salesmen, businessmen or farmers influenced by their social and economic status. In every society, children are involved in crime and the punishment for these activities can be a restriction of their liberty. The occupants of various juvenile institutions have different perceptions of freedom from children and adults who are not constrained. Because they say that "We are not colourful children with a colourful life. We are prisoners of a dark life". This study concludes that from the perceptions of freedom of the children who are imprisoned, it can be inferred that they are the ones who appreciate the real value of freedom.

This study determined the perception of freedom of imprisoned children using metaphors. A further study can be conducted with children who have not been imprisoned or have not been involved in crime to explore their perception of prison. This type of study can also be done with other individuals who have various disadvantages in our country and elsewhere in the world. For example, refugees, the poor, and people with disabilities can be considered for the possible sample group. Furthermore, different methods other than metaphors can be used in future studies. Such studies can provide useful information concerning how children perceive crime and punishment to find ways of both preventing children from committing offenses, and rehabilitating and educating children in prison.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest: The author declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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