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Early Childhood Preservice Teachers' Metaphoric Perceptions of Child in Turkish Culture^{*}

Okul Öncesi Öğretmen Adaylarının Türk Kültüründe Çocuk Kavramına Yönelik Metaforik Algıları

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate early childhood preservice teachers' perceptions of the "Child in Turkish Culture" through metaphors. The study group consists of 117 undergraduate students enrolled in the early childhood education program of a state university. The research data are based on the Personal Information Form and the participants' statements "In Turkish culture, a child is like... because...," which were obtained by filling in the blanks in the expression. The data were analyzed using the content analysis method. In the research, a phenomenological study was conducted as part of the qualitative research approach. As a result, 99 valid metaphors, 76 of which were different, were examined in terms of their common features and classified into 11 categories. According to the findings, the most frequently produced metaphors were joy, flower, gold, dough, tree, and puppet. The categories in which the most metaphors were produced are, respectively, "a precious asset", "the future of society", "manipulable and moldable", "natural and source of happiness". Freshmen preservice teachers mostly produce metaphors belonging to the "natural and source of happiness", while the metaphors created by senior preservice teachers intensify in the categories of "a precious asset" and "the future of society".

Keywords: Child in Turkish culture, Early childhood preservice teacher, Metaphor.

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ÖΖ

Bu araştırmada, okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının "Türk kültüründe çocuk" kavramına yönelik algılarının metafor yoluyla incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Ankara'da bir devlet üniversitesinin eğitim fakültesi okul öncesi öğretmenliği programında öğrenimine devam eden ve gönüllü olarak katılım sağlayan 117 lisans öğrencisi araştırmanın çalışma grubunu oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenoloji (olgubilim) deseni kullanılmıştır. Verilerin elde edilmesi amacıyla araştırmacılar tarafından bir veri toplama aracı tasarlanmıştır. Araştırmanın verileri, Kişisel Bilgi Formu ve katılımcıların "Türk kültüründe çocuk gibidir., çünkü'' ifadesindeki boşlukların doldurulması ile elde edilmiştir. Verilerin çözümlenmesinde içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen 76'sı farklı olmak üzere 99 geçerli metafor ortak özellikleri açısından incelenerek 11 kategori altında toplanmıştır. Araştırma bulgularına göre en çok üretilen metaforlar neşe, çiçek, altın, hamur, ağaç ve kukla olmuştur. En cok metaforun üretildiği kategoriler ise sırasıyla değerli bir varlık, toplumun geleceği, vönlendirilebilir ve sekillenebilir, doğal ve mutluluk kavnağı kategorileridir. Birinci sınıfta öğrenim gören okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının en fazla "doğal ve mutluluk kaynağı" kategorisine ait metafor ürettiği görülmektedir. Dördüncü sınıf okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının oluşturduğu metaforlar ise "değerli bir varlık" ve "toplumun geleceği" kategorilerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Türk kültüründe çocuk, Okul öncesi öğretmen adayı, Metafor.

INTRODUCTION

Culture is often defined as the beliefs, behaviors, customs, and values that characterize a particular social group (Lansford, 2022). Culture is not fixed; it is influenced over time by various factors, such as globalization, technology, social media, and urbanization (Lansford, Badahdah & Ben Brik, 2021). Culture has emerged as a product of many components and is constantly changing. Language, religion, history, customs and traditions, economy, geography, and values are examples of cultural elements. The value and perception of children, who are a part of culture and are affected by the culture in which they live, vary from culture to culture (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2017).

The fundamental cultural difference between Western and Asian cultures lies in their concepts of independence and interdependence (Wang & Leichtman, 2000). The United States and Europe exemplify independent/individualistic cultures in which personal goals take precedence. Conversely, in interdependent/collectivist societies, such as those in Asia, there is greater emphasis on family and communal goals over individual

needs. Consequently, in Western cultures, children are encouraged to express themselves and to foster independence, competitiveness, and self-sufficiency. However, in Asian cultures, there is more emphasis on children obeying, being harmonious, showing respect to elders, and emphasizing social interdependence (Keller & Otto, 2009). As a result of various cultural norms, the way adults perceive children varies among cultural groups, with differing impacts on children's developmental outcomes (Huang, Cheah, Lamb & Zhou, 2017).

The expectations from children in different cultures have evolved over time. For instance, in Chinese culture, shyness has been previously seen as a desirable trait associated with social competence and group conformity. However, with increasing Westernization and the transition to a market-based economy in Chinese culture, where personal initiative is rewarded, views on children's shyness have changed. Adults now consider shyness as an indicator of social inadequacy and tend to avoid reinforcing it (Chen, 2019). Contrasted with different cultures, while "obedience to parents" is chosen by 60% of Turkish parents as the most desired trait among children, only 18% chose "independence and self-confidence" (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982). In Turkish families, demanding obedience from children is widespread. Turkish mothers, even when living apart from their culture, tend to adhere to Turkish cultural values, emphasizing obedience, regardless of their social background (Yağmurlu & Sanson, 2009).

In the study titled "Value of children and family change: A three-decade portrait from Turkey" conducted by Kağıtçıbaşı and Ataca (2005), the reasons why mothers desire children, their expectations from their children when they become adults, and the numbers of existing, desired, and ideal children were examined. The value of the child was analyzed in three separate categories: economic, psychological, and social. Economic value refers to the child's support of the parents as they age, assistance in household chores, and financial contribution to the family. Psychological value includes the satisfaction of seeing the child grow, happiness derived from having young children around, and having someone to love and care for. Social value involves the continuation of the family's surname through the acceptance of the child by society. When

examining the reasons for desiring children, it is evident that in 2003, according to mothers, the psychological value of the child was significantly more important, whereas in 1975, according to mothers, the economic/utilitarian value of the child and "bearing a male child" were more important. When examining the expectations of their adult children, it was observed that in 2003, mothers' expectations of their adult children were much lower than in 1975. This applies to the expectations of both the daughters and sons. A comparison between mothers in 1975 and 2003 revealed a significant decrease in the number of existing, desired, and ideal children.

In another study conducted in Turkey by Kağıtçıbaşı, Sunar, and Bekman (2001), mothers emphasized politeness (37%) and obedience (35%) more than other qualities when defining the concept of a "good child". However, very few mothers mentioned being autonomous and self-sufficient (3.6%). Among the behaviors that most please mothers in children, positive relationship behaviors such as "treating the mother well" are among the most commonly mentioned. Positive social-relational behaviors (including being obedient, showing kindness, and getting along well with others) account for almost 80% of desired behaviors in children, according to mothers. Therefore, in Turkish culture, there is generally a high value placed on positive social orientation, appropriate behavior, and particularly on obedient tendencies. Kağıtçıbaşı (2017) also notes that the education levels of adults influence their perceptions of children. For example, many less-educated traditional Turkish mothers talk more about their children's growth.

Although metaphors provide insights into how people conceptualize their experiences, they are also closely related to culture. There are many different definitions of metaphors, especially in the social sciences. Holman (1980) defines metaphor as "a covert comparison that identifies one object with another imaginatively". Massengill, Shaw, and Mahlios (2008), on the other hand, define metaphor as "a tool for describing experience to give meaning to a person's life". According to Zhao, Coombs, and Zhou (2010), metaphor is not only a figure of speech but also constitutes a fundamental

mechanism of the mind that allows the modeling and concretization of previous experiences. Therefore, metaphors can be understood as a psychological modeling experience that leads to new conceptual insights. The significant relationship between metaphor and culture has been noted by Alger (2009): "Metaphors are often traditional". This indicates that metaphors are commonly found within cultures, and their meanings are shared across cultural contexts.

In research conducted with different study groups, metaphorical perceptions related to the concept of "child" have been investigated. For instance, studies have been carried out with early childhood preservice teachers (Akgün, 2016; Ergin, Şahin & Erişen, 2013; Kocer, Ünal & Eskidemir Meral, 2015), early childhood teachers (Ertul, 2020; Kuyucu, Şahin & Kapıcıoğlu, 2013; Lüle-Mert, 2021; Özdemir, Adıgüzel & Yıldız, 2019), students in child development departments (Demirbaş, 2015; Gülen & Dönmez, 2020; Güngör & Ogelman, 2022), students in recreation departments (Ünal, Silik & Cetinkaya, 2021), and parents (Ercan, 2014; Pesen, 2015). Previous research has focused on the general metaphorical perception of the concept of "child", making it particularly important for this study to specifically examine the concept of "child" within the context of Turkish culture. Early childhood preservice teachers represent the educators of the future, and the role of the teacher in a child's early years holds significant value. Hence, it is crucial to collaborate with preservice teachers and explore their perceptions of the concept of children in Turkish culture through metaphors. Examining the metaphors of early childhood preservice teachers regarding the concept of "child in Turkish culture" and evaluating them based on their university education will contribute to the literature. Due to the cultural differences in the perception of children and the values attributed to them, this research will facilitate a better understanding of the perception of children in Turkish culture, thereby providing professional contributions to future teachers. Upon reviewing existing research, no studies specifically investigating the metaphorical perceptions of early childhood preservice teachers regarding the concept of "child in Turkish culture" have been found. Therefore, the main aim of this research is to investigate the metaphorical perceptions

of early childhood preservice teachers regarding the concept of "child in Turkish culture". In line with this main objective, answers were sought to the following questions:

1- What are the metaphors of early childhood preservice teachers regarding the concept of "child in Turkish culture"?

2- What are the metaphors of early childhood preservice teachers regarding the concept of "child in Turkish culture" according to their grade levels?

METHODS

Research Model

In this research, the phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used to better understand the participants' perceptions regarding the concept of "child in Turkish culture" through the lens of metaphor. Qualitative research methods provide detailed information for a deeper understanding of the subject matter in an exploratory and interpretative manner (Creswell, 2013). Because of its focus on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding of, phenomenological design was preferred for this research. The metaphor method allows for a rich and in-depth data collection in qualitative studies, enabling the description, understanding, and comparison of social phenomena through metaphors (Patton, 2015; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this study, the phenomena mentioned by early childhood preservice teachers regarding the concept of "child in Turkish culture" were examined.

Study Group

The study included 117 preservice teachers who were enrolled in the undergraduate program for early childhood education at a state university faculty of education in Ankara. Among the participants, 23.07% were freshman, 35.04% were sophomore, 25.64% were junior, and 16.23% were senior. The majority of the group, comprising

94.87%, were female, with only 5.12% being male students. In terms of age distribution, 11.11% were aged 18 years or below, 16.23% were 19 years old, and the majority, accounting for 63.24%, were aged 20 years or older. When it comes to siblings, 1.70% of preservice teachers had no siblings, 19.65% had one sibling, 32.47% had two siblings, 25.64% had three siblings, and 20.51% had four or more siblings.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using a metaphor form comprising two sections. The first section required early childhood preservice teachers to provide demographic information. In the second section, participants were prompted to complete the statement "In Turkish culture, a child is like..." in order to elucidate the metaphors associated with the concept of "child in Turkish culture". Additionally, participants were required to fill out a personal information form, which included questions about gender, age, number of siblings, and grades.

Data Analysis

The research data were analyzed using the content analysis method, which aims to create a conceptual model by categorizing words into fewer categories related to content. In this study, content analysis was conducted in four stages: coding and classification, category formation, naming categories, and transferring them to the computer.

1- Coding and classification: Initially, the expressions of early childhood preservice teachers regarding the metaphor of "child in Turkish culture" were sorted alphabetically for data analysis. Coding was performed based on the generated metaphors, excluding codes where the reason was not stated or where the relationship between the metaphor and reason was not understood. The participants in the study group were coded as ECPT-1 (Early childhood preservice teacher-1), ECPT-2, ...ECPT-117.

2- Category formation: Next, the metaphors provided by early childhood preservice teachers were grouped into categories based on their common characteristics.

Metaphors lacking characteristics belonging to any created categories were excluded from classification.

3- Naming categories: The categories formed by grouping the metaphors according to relevant literature were named by the researchers.

4- Transfer to the computer environment: In the final stage, the metaphors and categories were transferred to a computer environment, and frequency values were calculated for further analysis.

Ethics Issues

The participants indicated their willingness to participate in the study by signing a voluntary consent form. The data for the research were obtained with ethical approval from the Gazi University Ethics Committee at the meeting held on 05.09.2023, under decision number 15, and approved with Ethics Committee conformity approval number E-77082166-604.01.02-743837.

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings obtained from the research data are presented in two parts: metaphors created by early childhood preservice teachers and metaphors created by them according to their grade levels.

Metaphors Created by Early Childhood Preservice Teachers

A total of 76 different metaphors were generated by 117 early childhood preservice teachers participating in the research regarding the concept of "child in Turkish culture", resulting in 99 valid metaphors in total. The most frequently used metaphor by early childhood preservice teachers was "joy (n=7)". Additionally, other frequently used metaphors include "flower (n=4), gold (n=3), dough (n=3), tree (n=3), puppet (n=3), heritage (n=2), water (n=2), sun (n=2), light (n=2), mirror (n=2)". In accordance with the research data, preservice teachers' perceptions of the concept of "child in Turkish culture" are presented within the framework of categories. The established categories are determined as "A precious asset, future of society, manipulable and moldable,

natural and source of happiness, in need of attention and care, harboring negative emotions, reason for societal acceptance, reflective, reason for being a family, laborintensive, pure and clean". The metaphors expressed by early childhood preservice teachers and the categories formed from these metaphors are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories Formed from Preservice Teachers' Metaphors Related to the

 Concept of "Child in Turkish Culture"

Categories	Metaphors	
A precious asset	Water (2), sun (2), gold (3), light (2), diamond (1), fish (1), pupil of eye (1), blessing (1), treasury (1), heritage (1), jewel (1), miracle (1), a piece of people themselves (1), valuable object (1), pearl grain (1)	20
The future of society	Heritage (2), small adult (1), tree (1), root of the tree (1), candlelight (1), bread (1), water (1), assurance (1), investment (1), present (1), miniature adult (1), future of the state (1), foundation for the future (1), light (1), seed of culture (1)	16
Manipulable and moldable	Dough (3), tree (3), puppet (3), robot (1), domino stones (1), copy (1), parental imprint (1), sapling (1), wood (1)	15
Natural and source of happiness	Joy (7), flower (2), rainbow (1), sun (1), Eid (1)	12
In need of care and attention	Flower (4), tree (1), seed (1), sapling (1), baby (1), glued to the family (1)	9
Harboring negative emotions	Object (2), prisoner (1), obligation (1), worthless (1), Mom and dad's second life (1), adult motif (1)	7
Reason for societal acceptance	Necessity (1), tool (1), status (1), object (1), salt in food (1), purpose (1), fruit (1)	7
Reflective	Mirror (2), plentifulness (1), river (1)	4
Reason for being a family	Reason for becoming a family (1), tool (1), obligation (1), basic entity that keeps the family together (1)	4
Labor-intensive	Fruit (1), coal (1), sapling (1)	3

Pure and clean	Water (1), angel (1)	2
Total	76	99

Table 1 shows the metaphors, the categories they belong to, and the number of participants. According to Table 1, the metaphor most frequently expressed by participants was found in the "A precious asset" category. This category is followed by the categories of "Future of society, manipulable and moldable, natural and source of happiness". Examples of categories, relevant metaphors, and rationales for metaphors are as follows:

1st Category: A Precious Asset

This category included 20 participants (20.20%) and 15 metaphors (19.73%), respectively. The most frequently used metaphors in the "A precious asset" category are "water (2), sun (2), gold (2), light (2)". These metaphors emphasize children's ability to illuminate their surroundings and values. The following are examples of metaphors in this category, along with their rationale.

ECPT-36: "In Turkish culture, a child is like the sun. Because they illuminate the house where they are born".

ECPT-53: "In Turkish culture, a child is like heritage. Because the child represents the future and is valuable".

ECPT-70: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a jewel. Because children are valued in Turkish culture".

ECPT-90: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a miracle. Because it is a precious gift that comes when people lose hope".'

2nd Category: The Future of Society

This category included 16 participants (16.16%), and 15 metaphors (19.73%). The most frequently used metaphor in this category is "heritage (2)". The metaphors in this category emphasize that children are the future of society, state, and culture. The following are examples of metaphors in this category, along with their rationale.

ECPT-47: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a tree. Because, just like a tree, they start from a seed, are nurtured, and when they grow up, they benefit from their shade and fruit".

ECPT-78: "In Turkish culture, a child is like the future of the state. Because the child represents the continuity of the generation. If the generation continues, the future of the state also continues".

ECPT-92: "In Turkish culture, a child is like light. Because light symbolizes hope, life means the future, and the child is the light that illuminates our future".

ECPT-101: "In Turkish culture, a child is like the valuable legacy left to the world. Because Turks want to raise their children perfectly in every aspect and leave them as beneficial individuals to the country and nation after them".

3rd Category: Manipulable and Moldable

This category included 15 participants (15.15%) and 9 metaphors (11.84%). The most frequently used metaphors in the "Manipulable and moldable" category are "dough (3), tree (3), puppet (3)". The common characteristic of metaphors in this category is that children are open to guidance and can be shaped according to interventions. The following are examples of metaphors in this category, along with their rationale.

ECPT-6: "In Turkish culture, a child is like dough. Because they are raised within the framework of our traditions and customs, and children are shaped accordingly".

ECPT-10: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a robot being directed according to instructions. Because most parents in Turkey do not know how to raise a child".

ECPT-32: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a copy of the family's desire to be based on their own thoughts. Because even though they support their development, when children have a different opinion, situations like judgment and lack of understanding occur. But there has been improvement in this regard lately".

ECPT-52: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a puppet. Because the family believes they have a say in every aspect of the child's life".

ECPT-108: "In Turkish culture, a child is like wood. Because they become whatever shape they are given".

4th Category: Natural and Source of Happiness

This category included 12 participants (12.12%) and 5 metaphors (6.57%). The most frequently used metaphors in the "Natural and source of happiness" category are "joy (7), flower (2)". The common characteristic of metaphors in this category is that children are natural sources of joy, happiness, and peace to their surroundings. The following are examples of metaphors in this category, along with their rationale.

ECPT-56: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a flower that ties you to life. Because it makes you forget all your bad moments".

ECPT-63: "In Turkish culture, a child is like the sun. Because children bring happiness and peace to families".

ECPT-69: "In Turkish culture, a child is like the joy of the home. Because when all family members come together in the evenings, they are the reason for the smiles on everyone's faces".

5th Category: In Need of Care and Attention

This category included 9 participants (9.09%) and 6 metaphors (7.89%). The most frequently used metaphor in the "In need of care and attention" category is "flower (4)". The metaphors in this category emphasize that children need care, attention, and love. The following are examples of metaphors in this category, along with their rationale.

ECPT-9: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a flower. Because, just like a flower, a child is carefully protected, nourished, and nurtured every day".

ECPT-76: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a sapling. Because patience, kindness, love, and attention are necessary for healthy growth".

ECPT-87: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a baby. Because they forget that the child is an individual. No matter how much they grow, they are treated like a baby".

ECPT-102: "In Turkish culture, a child is like glued to the family. Because the family believes that the child cannot do anything on their own and wants to be there for

them from the smallest to the largest situation. They do not allow the child to solve their problems on their own".

6th Category: Harboring Negative Emotions

This category comprised 7 participants (7.07%) and 6 metaphors (7.89%). Metaphors in this category emphasize that children evoke negative feelings. The following are examples of metaphors in this category, along with their rationale.

ECPT-29: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a prisoner. Because they are never allowed to leave the family's wings and are expected to live according to their family's decisions".

ECPT-55: "In Turkish culture, a child is like an object or limb. Because they are raised under societal pressure with a traditionalist perspective. If the child rejects this and insists on their own thoughts, they are either rejected by the family or faced with increased pressure. They are not accepted as individuals and are controlled like a limb attached to the parents".

ECPT-105: "In Turkish culture, a child is considered worthless. Because they are thought to have no place, and therefore, they are considered insignificant".

7th Category: Reason for Societal Acceptance

This category included 7 participants (6.8%) and 7 metaphors (9.21%). The fundamental characteristic of metaphors in the "Reason for societal acceptance" category is that families are accepted by society through their children. The following are examples of metaphors in this category, along with their rationale.

ECPT-49: "In Turkish culture, a child is like salt in food. Because those who have never eaten food without salt throughout their lives do not know the taste of salt, and they have no complaints about this situation; they get used to it and carry on. They have never attempted to add salt to food. However, those who know the taste of salt, even once it has been tasted, cannot give it up. They even try to add salt immediately without tasting food because they make it a habit and even become addicted to it. Especially in today's Turkish society, with factors such as the level of education, some adults may choose to have children or a childless life, but they do not complain about this situation. In such cases, individuals or families with children are like salted dishes. In families with traditional, extended family structures, children are seen as the fundamental building blocks of a family, and they are considered necessary and indispensable because everyone around them imposes this perspective on them, influencing their view of children, and they do not complain about this situation; therefore, these families can also be likened to salted dishes".

ECPT-54: "In Turkish culture, a child is like necessity. Because they believe there cannot be a family without children".

ECPT-59: "In Turkish culture, a child is like status. Because it is believed that respectability is achieved through children".

8th Category: Reflective

This category consisted of 4 participants (4.04%) and 3 metaphors (3.94%). The most frequently used metaphors in this category are "mirror (2)". The metaphors in this category suggest that children reflect the attitudes and behaviors displayed towards them. The following are examples of metaphors in this category, along with their rationale.

ECPT-8: "In Turkish culture, a child is like the plentifulness in the house. Because just as the care and love shown to a sprout in the field reflect on the abundance of its yield, the child's joy, assistance to the family, communication style with the family, being a good person to the family and society, and doing good deeds also reflect accordingly".

ECPT-61: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a mirror. Because you see yourself in them".

ECPT-68: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a mirror. Because they reflect their family and culture".

9th Category: Reason for Being a Family

This category consists of 4 participants (4.04%) and 4 metaphors (5.26%). The fundamental characteristic of the metaphors in the "Reason for being a family" category is that children are seen as the fundamental building block of a family. The following are examples of metaphors in this category, along with their rationale.

ECPT-98: "In Turkish culture, a child is like an obligation. Because I think the condition for being a family is tied to whether there are children at home".

ECPT-107: "In Turkish culture, a child is the basic entity that keeps the family together. Because even unhappy families usually do not divorce and they are beings for whom efforts are made to be happy".

10th Category: Labor-Intensive

This category consists of 3 participants (3.03%) and 3 metaphors (3.94%). The metaphors in the "Labor-intensive" category emphasize that children require effort and labor. The following are examples of metaphors in this category, along with their rationale.

ECPT-4: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a fruit. Because to grow fruit, a lot of effort, hard work, and using the right methods are necessary, and as a result, we have very sweet, beautiful, well-grown fruits. Similarly, to raise a child, much effort, sacrifices, and using the right methods are necessary. And as a result, we raise very beautiful, sweet, compassionate, kind, and hardworking children".

ECPT-5: "In Turkish culture, a child is like coal. Because it's like coal, which waits to be discovered and is extracted with difficulty".

ECPT-23: "In Turkish culture, a child is like a sapling. Because just like how much yield you get from a sapling when you take care of it with great care, the same applies to children. Because if you look after them, they thrive, but if you neglect them, they become wild".

11th Category: Pure and Clean

This category consists of 2 participants (2.02%) and 2 metaphors (2.63%). The metaphors in this category emphasize that children are pure and clean. The following are examples of metaphors in this category, along with their rationale.

ECPT-73: "In Turkish culture, a child is like water. Because a child is pure and clean".

ECPT-80: "In Turkish culture, a child is like an angel. Because a child is born pure and clean. But it gets corrupted because of us".

Metaphors Created by Early Childhood Preservice Teachers According to Grade Levels

The distribution of metaphors created by early childhood preservice teachers according to grade levels is presented in Table 2. According to Table 2, freshman early childhood preservice teachers produce the most metaphors belonging to the category of "natural and source of happiness". Metaphors created by senior early childhood preservice teachers are concentrated in the categories of "a precious asset" and "future of society". While freshman early childhood preservice teachers produce the most metaphors produce the most metaphors in the "natural and source of happiness" category, senior early childhood preservice teachers have not produced any metaphors in this category.

Categories	Freshman	Senior
A precious asset	3	5
The future of society	2	5
Manipulable and moldable	3	1
Natural and source of happiness	4	-
In need of care and attention	1	1
Harboring negative emotions	2	2
Reason for societal acceptance	2	1
Reflective	3	-
Reason for being a family	1	-

Table 2. Metaphors Created by Preservice Teachers According to Grade Levels

Labor-intensive	-	2
Pure and clean	2	-
Total	23	17

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine perceptions of the concept "child in Turkish culture" through metaphors, 99 valid metaphors were obtained from 117 early childhood preservice teachers, resulting in 76 different metaphors. The obtained metaphors were analyzed under 11 different categories. The results obtained from the data can be summarized as follows: Among the generated 76 metaphors, the most repeated metaphor was "joy" (n=7), followed by "flower" (n=4), "gold" (n=4), "dough" (n=3), "tree" (n=3), and "puppet" (n=3). Early childhood preservice teachers produced the most metaphors in the category of "a precious asset" (n=20). The other categories with the highest number of metaphors are respectively "future of society" (n=16), "manipulable and moldable" (n=15), and "natural and source of happiness" (n=12) categories. In similar studies, the most frequently used metaphors include tree, sapling, dough, mirror, and flower (Güngör & Ogelman, 2022; Koçer et al., 2015; Kuyucu et al., 2013; Lüle-Mert, 2021; Saban, 2009).

In studies conducted with preservice teachers and teachers, emphasis is placed on children being "manipulable" and "in need of care, attention, and love" in the conceptual categories where metaphors related to the concept of children are included (Akgün, 2016; Demirbaş, 2015; Ergin et al., 2013; Gülen & Dönmez, 2020; Koçer et al., 2015; Kuyucu et al., 2013; Özdemir et al., 2019). However, in studies conducted with parents, conceptual categories containing metaphors related to the concept of children emphasize children being a "a precious asset", "source of happiness", "promising for the future" and "the joy of life" (Bolat & Abbasoğlu, 2023; Ercan, 2014; Pesen, 2015). Upon examining the relevant literature, it is evident that the participants'

profession, educational background, age group, and other personal characteristics influence the image of children in their minds.

When examining the metaphors related to the concept of "child in Turkish culture" across different grade levels to unveil the development and changes of early childhood preservice teachers over the years, it was found that freshman early childhood preservice teachers produce the most metaphors in the category of "natural and source of happiness", while senior early childhood preservice teachers did not produce any metaphors in this category. It is observed that first-year students in the early childhood education undergraduate program produce the most metaphors belonging to the category of "natural and source of happiness". The metaphors created by senior early childhood preservice teachers are concentrated in the categories of "a precious asset" and "future of society". Similarly, Saban (2009) found that among 2847 preservice teachers studying at first and fourth grade levels in different programs, one of the categories with the most metaphors produced was "a precious asset". According to a longitudinal study conducted by Kıldan et al. (2012) with preservice teachers in different departments, it is observed that although they create more structuralist philosophy-based metaphors (e.g., researcher, curious bird) when they reach the fourth grade compared to the first grade, there are still a considerable number of preservice teachers who, despite being in the fourth grade, perceive the child as a passive recipient and believe that their lives are shaped by their family, teacher, and environment.

In addition to contributing to the relevant literature, the findings of this research provide important insights into the perceptions of early childhood preservice teachers regarding the concept of "child in Turkish culture", indicating that metaphor can be a powerful tool in revealing such perceptions. This study was conducted with a limited number of preservice teachers at a state university in Ankara. Similar studies conducted with participants from different higher education institutions and teacher training programs will shed light on the mental images of preservice teachers regarding the concept of "child in Turkish culture". In this study, only the views of university students continuing their education in different grade levels of early childhood education programs were examined. Examining the responses of the same participants to similar questions after they graduate can provide an opportunity for comparison. Thus, it can offer insight into the development and changes in their knowledge, experiences gained during the four-year undergraduate program, and their professional experiences after graduation.

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GENİŞ ÖZET

Giriş

Kültür genellikle belirli bir toplumsal grubu karakterize eden inançlar, davranışlar, gelenekler ve değerler olarak tanımlanır (Lansford, 2022). Kültür birçok bileşenin ürünü olarak ortaya çıkar ve sürekli değişim içindedir. Dil, din, tarih, örf ve adetler, ekonomi, coğrafya ve değerler kültürün ögelerine örnek olarak verilebilir. Kültürün bir parçası olan ve içinde bulundukları kültürden etkilenen çocuklara verilen değer ve çocuk algısı kültürden kültüre değişmektedir (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2017). Batı ve Asya kültürleri arasındaki temel kültürel fark, bağımsızlık ve karşılıklı bağımlılık kavramıdır (Wang ve Leichtman, 2000). Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve Avrupa, kişisel hedeflerin ön planda olduğu bağımsız/bireyci kültürlerin örnekleridir; Asya gibi karşılıklı bağımlı/kolektivist toplumlarda ise bireysel ihtiyaçların üzerinde aile ve ortak hedeflere daha fazla vurgu yapılır. Bu nedenle, Batı kültürlerinde çocukların kendisini ifade etmesi, bağımsızlığı, rekabetçiliği ve kendi kendine yeterliliği teşvik edilirken, Asya kültürlerinde çocukların itaat etmesi, uyumlu olması, büyüklere saygı duyması ve sosyal karşılıklı bağımlılığa daha fazla vurgu yapmaktadır (Keller ve Otto, 2009). Çeşitli kültürel normların bir sonucu olarak, yetişkinlerin çocuklara bakış açısının çocukların gelişimsel sonuçları üzerindeki etkileri kültürel gruplar arasında da farklılık göstermektedir (Huang, Cheah, Lamb ve Zhou, 2017).

Okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının "Türk kültüründe çocuk" kavramına ilişkin metaforlarının incelenmesi ve aldıkları üniversite eğitimine göre değerlendirilmesi literatüre katkı sağlayacaktır. Bu araştırmanın temel amacı okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının "Türk kültüründe çocuk" kavramına ilişkin metaforik algılarını incelemektir. Bu temel amaç doğrultusunda aşağıdaki sorulara cevap aranmıştır:

1- Okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının "Türk kültüründe çocuk" kavramına ilişkin metaforları nelerdir?

2- Okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının sınıf düzeylerine göre "Türk kültüründe çocuk" kavramına ilişkin belirttikleri metaforlar nelerdir?

Yöntem

Okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının "Türk kültüründe çocuk" kavramına ilişkin algılarını metafor ile incelemek amacıyla gerçekleştirilen bu araştırmada katılımcıların algılarının daha iyi anlaşılabilmesi için nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenoloji deseni kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu Ankara'da bir devlet üniversitesinin eğitim fakültesinin okul öncesi öğretmenliği lisans programında öğrenim gören 117 öğretmen adayı oluşturmaktadır. "Türk kültüründe çocuk" kavramına ilişkin sahip oldukları metaforları belirlemek üzere katılımcılardan "Türk kültüründe çocuk…….. gibidir, çünkü……." ifadesini tamamlamaları istenmiştir. Ayrıca, cinsiyet, yaş, kardeş sayısı, sınıfa ilişkin bilgileri içeren kişisel bilgi formunu doldurmaları istenmiştir. Araştırma verileri içerik analizi yöntemi ile çözümlenmiştir.

Bulgular

Elde edilen 76'sı farklı olmak üzere 99 geçerli metafor ortak özellikleri açısından incelenerek 11 kategori altında toplanmıştır. Araştırma bulgularına göre en çok üretilen metaforlar neşe, çiçek, altın, hamur, ağaç ve kukla olmuştur. En çok metaforun üretildiği kategoriler ise sırasıyla değerli

bir varlık, toplumun geleceği, yönlendirilebilir ve şekillenebilir, doğal ve mutluluk kaynağı kategorileridir. Birinci sınıfta öğrenim gören okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının en fazla "doğal ve mutluluk kaynağı" kategorisine ait metafor ürettiği görülmektedir. Dördüncü sınıf okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının oluşturduğu metaforlar ise "değerli bir varlık" ve "toplumun geleceği" kategorilerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır.

Tartışma ve Sonuç

Öğretmen adayları ve öğretmenler ile yapılan araştırmalarda çocuk kavramına ilişkin oluşturdukları metaforların ver aldığı kavramsal kategorilerde cocukların "vönlendirilebilir ile bakıma, ilgiye ve sevgiye muhtaç" olmasına vurgu yapılmaktadır (Akgün, 2016; Demirbaş, 2015; Ergin ve diğ., 2013; Gülen ve Dönmez, 2020; Koçer ve diğ., 2015; Kuyucu ve diğ., 2013; Özdemir ve diğ., 2019). Ebeveynler ile yapılan araştırmalarda ise çocuk kavramına ilişkin oluşturulan metaforların yer aldığı kavramsal kategorilerde çocukların "değerli bir varlık, mutluluk kaynağı, gelecek vaat eden, hayatın neşesi" olması vurgulanmaktadır (Bolat ve Abbasoğlu, 2023; Ercan, 2014; Pesen, 2015). Okul öncesi öğretmenliği lisans programındaki birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin en fazla "doğal ve mutluluk kaynağı" kategorisine ait metafor ürettiği görülmektedir. Dördüncü sınıf okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının oluşturduğu metaforlar ise "değerli bir varlık" ve "toplumun geleceği" kategorilerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Benzer bir şekilde Saban (2009) farklı branşlarda birinci ve dördüncü sınıf düzeyinde öğrenim gören 2847 öğretmen adayı tarafından en fazla metaforun üretildiği kategorilerden birinin "değerli bir varlık" olduğunu bulmuştur. Kıldan ve diğerlerinin (2012) farklı branşlarda öğretmen adaylarıyla gerçekleştirdiği boylamsal bir araştırma sonucuna göre, dördüncü sınıfa geldiklerinde birinci sınıfa göre daha fazla yapısalcı felsefeye dayalı metafor (örneğin, araştırmacı, meraklı kuş) oluşturdukları görülse de dördüncü sınıf olmasına rağmen çocuğu pasif bir alıcı olarak gören, ailesi, öğretmeni ve çevresi tarafından hayatının şekillendirildiğini düşünen öğretmen adayı sayısı oldukça fazladır.

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Conflict of Interest

The researchers do not have any personal or financial conflicts of interest with other individuals or institutions related to the research.

Ethics Committee Declaration

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