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ANALYZING WRESTLERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF WRESTLING
BY STUDYING THE METAPHORS OF THE ATHLETES
FROM THE TURKISH NATIONAL TEAM

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ABSTRACT
This study aimed to explore the perceptions of wrestlers on the Turkish national wrestling team by analyzing their metaphors for wrestling. 107 athletes voluntarily participated in this study in 2013. Data were collected by asking the volunteers to fill in the blanks of the following sentence: “Wrestling is like … since …” In this way, it was expected that each participant would come up with a metaphor. For this study, the phenomenology research design was used and the data were analyzed using the content analysis technique. Within this scope, the analysis and interpretation of data is carried out in five stages: (1) Specifying the metaphors (2) Classifying the metaphors (3) Developing the categories (4) Ensuring validity and reliability (5) Entering data into SPSS program for the quantitative data analysis. According to the findings of the research, the participants generated 59 valid metaphors for wrestling. 10 different categories were developed by examining common characteristics of the metaphors. It was found that participants perceived wrestling as follows: As an expression of life (31 %), as a guide-ideal (19.2 %), as happiness (13.9 %), as dependence (11.7 %), as culture (10.7%), as income (9.6 %), as continuity (8.5 %), as diversity-richness (5.3 %), as strategy (5.3 %), as porterage-carrier of burdens (2.1 %).

Key Words: wrestling, athlete, perception, metaphor.

INTRODUCTION
Human beings sometimes imitate other beings in nature and sometimes try to express themselves by relating their lives with these beings. Metaphors are one of these expressions. Metaphor can be defined as a figure of speech in which one concept or situation is used to describe another concept or situation (1). Metaphor is a way of thinking and perceiving (13). Metaphors are not only figures of speech and ways of perception but also figures of thought (12). They establish relations between old information and new information by finding their similarities, thus helping to explain new information in a tangible way (19). Metaphor is a powerful cognitive tool for grasping and explaining highly abstract, complex or theoretical phenomena (15). As it can be seen from the definitions, it is a figurative way of describing concepts. According to Forceville (8), three questions have to be answered before accepting something as a metaphor: 1-Which is the metaphor’s target domain? 2-Which is the metaphor’s source domain? 3- Which features are mapped from the source domain to the target domain? We can exemplify this relation as follows: Metaphor’s target (like “wrestling” in the metaphor of “Wrestling is like a clock”), Metaphor’s source (a clock) and features that are mapped from the source to the target (Wrestling is a sports branch that requires continuity and work like a clock). Metaphors have increasingly become the objects of studies in both local and international literatures over the last few years as more scholars were interested in the subject. The studies of following scholars can be given as examples of this trend: Inbar (11), Guerro and Villamil (9), Botha (6), Alger (3), Shaw, Barry & Mahlios (20), Forceville (8), Saban (15,16,17,18), Töremen and Döş (22), Girmen (10), Aydoğdu (4), Arslan and Bayraçış (2), Öztürk (14) and Cerit (7). In general, these studies revealed their participants’ metaphors for subjects and phenomena like “teacher,” “student,” “knowledge,” “manager,” “inspector,” “school” and “culture.” When the sports literature is examined, it was seen that only a few number of studies focused on metaphors. Bektaş et al. (5) studied the metaphors of youth Olympic volunteers’ perceptions of the Olympics prior to the Olympics, and Şirin et al. (21) examined metaphoric perceptions of rafters with regard to rafting. Seeing metaphor as a tool for perception, a way of thinking and perceiving, a medium for constructing or building reality (23) can contribute to problem-solving by offering a different perspective for the existing
problems in the field of sports. In this respect, this study, which was carried out with wrestlers, can provide cues for understanding and unearthing the athletes' expectations and motivations for entering this branch of sports.

The Purpose of Study
The general purpose of this research was to explore the ideas of wrestlers, who have actively wrestled on the Turkish national wrestling team, with regard to wrestling by studying their metaphors. Within the scope of this general purpose, we sought to answer the following questions:

1. Which metaphors did participants use for expressing their perceptions of “wrestling”?  
2. Into which categories did participants’ metaphors fall, with respect to their common characteristics?

METHOD
The Scanning model was used for this research, which aimed to explore the Turkish national team wrestlers’ perception of “wrestling.” A qualitative approach was chosen for the study. The wrestlers’ metaphors for wrestling were collected with an open-ended questionnaire and described accordingly. 107 people participated in the study. They were randomly selected from the athletes who have actively wrestled for Turkish National Wrestling team in 2013.

Collection and Analysis of Data
An open-ended questionnaire form was prepared for exploring the wrestlers’ perceptions of wrestling. The questionnaire form was finalized after it was reviewed by the experts. In the form, athletes were asked to fill in the blanks: “Wrestling is like … since …” Participants’ metaphors were analyzed using content analysis. Meanwhile, frequency values were given for the metaphors that were generated. The analysis and interpretation of the metaphors were carried out in five phases: “determination of the metaphors,” “classification of the metaphors,” “developing categories,” “ensuring validity and reliability” and “entering data into SPSS package program for quantitative analysis.” When specifying the metaphors, we took following factors into consideration: Participants’ specific reference to the metaphor, a relation with the metaphor, no definition allowed in the metaphors. In the stage of classifying the metaphors, they were sorted temporarily by considering the relation between metaphor’s source and target. While some metaphors were used only by one participant, some of them were uttered more than one athlete. While some metaphors mentioned more than once were in the same category, some of them were in different categories due to the different point of views. Thus, in total, 107 metaphors with 59 codes were specified. Frequency values for these specified metaphors were calculated. Generated metaphors were categorized according to the relation between the target and source. These categories and metaphors were submitted to two experts (except the researchers) for review in order to ensure validity and reliability of the research. The experts examined the created categories and the metaphors that fell into these categories. The frequencies and the codes of participants’ metaphors were indicated in the chart, the categories and the metaphors within these categories were shown in the table, and they were interpreted by quoting the athletes directly.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS
In this section, the findings on participants’ metaphors for “wrestling” were presented in tables according to the research questions and they were interpreted by quoting the participants directly.

Findings on Participants’ Metaphors for “Wrestling”
The participants used 59 valid metaphors for “Wrestling.” 29 metaphors out of total 59 metaphors were generated by a single participant, which are; guy, guy thing, love, mirror, care, grocery, Beşiktaş, will not be given up, sweetheart, flower basket, dance, man, heroin, marriage, Galatasaray, beautiful, air, life, light, job, logic, fruit, breath, chess, our darling, cigarette, food, bravery, manliness and heart. Following metaphors were mentioned more than once; life (f=17), love (f=6), everything (f=5), ancestor, ancestor sport, occupation (f=4), way of life, water, love, clock, market, way of living, tradition (f=3), work of laborer, mother, our ancestor sport, heart, school, prophet’s sport, life, life style (f=2). As it can be seen above, the participants used a plethora of metaphors for the concept of wrestling.
Table 1. Valid metaphors used by the participants for the concept of “Wrestling,” the number and percentages of participants representing them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphor number</th>
<th>Metaphor</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Metaphor number</th>
<th>Metaphor</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Guy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Is life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Guy thing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Work of laborer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Is love</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Logic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ancestor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ancestor sport</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Our ancestor sport</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mirror</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Breath</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Grocery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Prophet sport</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Beşiktaş (name of team)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Clock</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Will not be given up</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sweetheart</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Chess</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Flower basket</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Our darling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Cigarette</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Living</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Galatasaray</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Way of living</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Life style</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Beautiful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Bravery, manliness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.02</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Way of life</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>107 (f)</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 (%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Categories of Participants’ Metaphors for the Concept of “Wrestling”

Participants’ metaphors for the concept of “Wrestling” were put into 10 categories, which are; Wrestling as an expression of life, Wrestling as a guide-an ideal, Wrestling as an expression of happiness, Wrestling as an expression of dependence, Wrestling as an expression of culture, Wrestling as income, Wrestling as continuity, Wrestling as an expression of diversity-richness, Wrestling as a strategy and Wrestling as a porterage-carrying life’s burdens. The categories of participants’ metaphors for “Wrestling” are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Categories of participants’ metaphors for the concept of “Wrestling.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Metaphors</th>
<th>Metaphor f (%)</th>
<th>Codes of metaphors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Wrestling as an expression of life</td>
<td>Life (13), way of life (5), living (2), love (2), everything (2), life style (1), water (1), fall in love (1) health (1), is life (1)</td>
<td>29 (31.0%)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Wrestling as a guide-as an ideal</td>
<td>Ancestor (4), Mother (2), Prophet’s sport (2), guy (1), guy thing (1), mirror (1), care (1), man (1), air (1), everything (1), light (1), bravery-manliness (1), heart (1)</td>
<td>18 (19.2%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Wrestling as an expression of happiness

| Conceptual Categories | Fall in love (6), our darling (1), beautiful (1), love (1), way of life (1), dance (1), sweetheart (1), marriage (1) | 13 (13.9) | 8 |

4. Wrestling as an expression of dependence

| Conceptual Categories | Water (2), Beşiktaş (1), Galatasaray (1), Will not be given up (1), heroin (1), life (1), breath (1), cigarette (1), life style (1), food (1) | 11 (11.7) | 10 |

5. Wrestling as an expression of culture

| Conceptual Categories | Ancestor sport (4), tradition (3), our ancestors’ sport (2), everything (1) | 10 (10.7) | 4 |

6. Wrestling as an expression of income

| Conceptual Categories | Occupation (4), market (3), grocery (1), job (1) | 9 (9.6) | 4 |

7. Wrestling as an expression of continuity

| Conceptual Categories | Clock (3), life (3), heart (2) | 8 (8.5) | 3 |

8. Wrestling as an expression of richness-diversity

| Conceptual Categories | School (2), flower basket (1), everything (1), fruit (1) | 5 (5.3) | 4 |

9. Wrestling as an expression of strategy

| Conceptual Categories | Logic (1), chess (1) | 2 (5.3) | 2 |

10. Wrestling as an expression of porterage

| Conceptual Categories | Work of laborer (2) | 2 (2.1) | 1 |

Total | 107 | 59

Conceptual Categories

Category 1. Wrestling as an expression of life. This category comprised of 10 metaphors used by 29 participants (31.0%), who identified wrestling with life and saw it as life or a part of life. When the frequency distributions (the number of participants) of the metaphors in this category were examined, the most used metaphors were as follows: life (13), way of life (5), living (2), affection (2), everything (2), life style (1), water (1), is love (1), health (1), is life (1). The participants’ sentences within this category were indicated below:

“Wrestling is like life since it can be lived but cannot be told.”

“Wrestling is like a way of life since it gives a meaning to our lives.”

“Wrestling is like everything since life is so simple without it.”

“Wrestling is like love since it can’t be made without love.”

Category 2. Wrestling as a guide-as an ideal. This category of wrestling as a guide-as an ideal horizon comprised of 13 metaphors of 18 participants (19.2%). The most used metaphors in this category (based on frequency distributions) were as follows: ancestor (4), mother (2), Prophet’s sport (2), guy (1), guy thing (1), mirror (1), care (1), man (1), air (1), everything (1), light (1), bravery, manliness (1) and heart (1). Some participants’ statements in this category were noted below:

“Wrestling is like an ancestor since I love it.”

“Wrestling is like a mother since it organizes one’s life.”

“Wrestling is like a guy since it’s a hell of guy. It can’t be described but can be lived.”

“Wrestling is like Prophet’s sport since it works out whole body.”

“Wrestling is like a mirror since it reflects the conditions of life.”

Category 3. Wrestling as an expression of happiness. This category was composed of 8 metaphors used by 13 participants (13.9%), who saw wrestling as an expression of happiness. When we looked at the frequency distributions of metaphors within this category, the most used ones were respectively as follows: Fall in love (6), our darling (1), beautiful (1), love (1), way of life (1), dance (1), sweetheart (1), marriage (1). Participants’ some statements within this category were as follows:

“Wrestling is like falling in love, since not everybody could fall in love.”

“Wrestling is like love since lovers are attached to each other for a life time.”

“Wrestling is like marriage since you are happy in every second of it.”

“Wrestling is like dance since it is fun.”

Category 4. Wrestling as a form of dependence. 10 metaphors fell into this category, which was constituted by 11 participants (11.7%), who saw wrestling as a form of dependence. When their frequency distributions were checked, the most used metaphors were as follows: Water (2), Beşiktaş (1), Galatasaray (1), will not be given up
Category 5. Wrestling as an expression of culture. As it can be seen from the table 3, this category comprised of 4 metaphors and 10 participants (10.7%). The most used metaphors in this category (based on their frequency distributions) were as follows: Ancestor sport (4), tradition (3), our ancestors’ sport (2), everything (1). Some participants’ expressions within this category were given below:

“Wrestling is like ancestor sport since it's brave.”
“Wrestling is like a tradition since it’s our ancestors’ sport.”

Category 6. Wrestling as income. 4 metaphors and 9 athletes (9.6%) were in this category of wrestling as income. Depending on their frequency distributions, the most used ones were respectively: Occupation (4), market (3), job (1). Some participants’ expressions within this category were indicated below:

“Wrestling is like an occupation since it helps us to make money.”
“Wrestling is like a market, since it works up to some point and then stops working.”
“Wrestling is like a job since it brings material and spiritual gains.”

Category 7. Wrestling as an expression of continuity. 3 metaphors and 8 athletes (8.5 %) were in this category, which was constituted by the participants who saw wrestling as continuity. Depending on the frequency distributions, most used metaphors in this category were as follows: Clock (3), life (3), heart (2). Some participants’ sentences within this category were cited below:

“Wrestling is like a clock since you have to work non-stop.”
“Wrestling is like a heart since it won’t beat without working.”
“Wrestling is like life since we’re always in a struggle.”

Category 8. Wrestling as an expression of richness-diversity. This category comprised of 4 metaphors and 5 athletes (5.3%), who saw wrestling as an expression of richness-diversity. When the frequency distributions were checked, the most used metaphors were as follows: School (2), flower basket (1), everything (1), fruit (1). Some participants’ expressions within this category were indicated below:

“Wrestling is like a school since there are people from each class.”
“Wrestling is like a flower basket since it has all kinds of flowers.”

Category 9. Wrestling as an expression of strategy. This category comprised of 4 metaphors and 5 athletes (5.3%), who saw wrestling as an expression of strategy. When the frequency distributions of metaphors within this category were examined, the most used ones were logic (1) and chess (1). Participants’ statements under this category were given below:

“Wrestling is like logic since the one who doesn’t act logically will be defeated.”
“Wrestling is like chess since not everybody can play chess.”

Category 10. Wrestling as a porterage. There was a 1 metaphor and 2 athletes (2.1%) in this category that was constituted by those who saw wrestling as a porterage. When the frequency distribution was checked, there was one metaphor: Work of laborer (2). Here below the participants’ statements within this category:

“Wrestling is like a work of laborer since it is heavy.”
“Wrestling is like a work of laborer since it is a very heavy work.”

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of wrestlers’ who have actively wrestled for the Turkish national wrestling team and to classify their perceptions of wrestling under certain conceptual categories. According to the findings of the study, the participants generated 59 valid metaphors with respect to wrestling. After examining the common characteristics of these metaphors, 10 different categories were created. In this study, it was found that participants saw wrestling as follows: 31 % of the participants as an expression of life, 19.2 % of the participants...
as a guide—an ideal, 13.9 % as an expression of happiness, 11.7 % as an expression of dependency, 10.7 % as an expression of culture, 9.6 % as a source of income, 8.5 % as an expression of continuity, 5.3 % as an expression of richness-diversity, 5.3 % as strategy and 2.1% as portrage. When the athletes’ metaphors for wrestling were examined, it was found that the most used metaphors were *life* (f=20), *love* (f=6), *everything* (f=5) as unique findings of this study.

When we categorized the participants’ perceptions of wrestling, we saw that most of the metaphors fell into the categories of “life” and “guide.” While 31 % of the athletes equated wrestling with life, 19.2 % of them associated it with a guide or an ideal. This result showed that participants perceived wrestling as a way and philosophy of life. The least used metaphor categories were “strategy and portrage.”

In conclusion, for sports scientists, findings of this research revealed important clues for exploring, understanding and explaining the athletes’ personal perceptions of wrestling. In line with this, metaphors can be used as a powerful *research tool* for unearthing, understanding and explaining the mental images of wrestlers with respect to wrestling. Furthermore, required changes on participants’ perceptions of wrestling can be studied considering the educational aims of wrestling, which is one of the combat sports. These metaphors and studies like this are important guides that can bring us new perspectives for combat sports in general and wrestling education in specific. Considering the fact that participation in combat sports differs from participations in other sport branches, wrestling branch requires mental images. In combat sports, it’s important to explain this complicated situation with the help of metaphors. Starting from this thought, we recommend that similar studies can be undertaken or repeated for other branches of the combat sports’ (taekwondo, boxing, judo and karate) athletes and trainers. Researchers who would like to prepare lists or scales of metaphors can use the metaphors found in this study as a source.

**REFERENCES**


