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# Children's Perceptions of Basketball through Metaphors and Drawings

Nagihan Çaredar<sup>1</sup>, Aylin Özge Pekel<sup>2</sup>, Çağdaş Özgür Cengizel<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Faculty of Sport Sciences, Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey

Correspondence: Nagihan Çaredar, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Gazi University, Ankara. Tel: +903122023500.  
E-mail: nagihancaredar@gazi.edu.tr

## Abstract

In order to improve the performance of children, their physical needs as well as their mental needs should be known. The aim of this study is to reveal the perceptions of basketball concepts of athletes attending basketball sports schools with the help of metaphors and drawings. A total of 57 athletes who trained in basketball sports schools in Ankara participated in this study. It was used qualitative research approach in this study. In obtaining the data, a personal information form was applied to each athlete and "basketball ..... it is like this; because ..." and were asked to draw a picture reflecting their thoughts on the concept of basketball. All participants took part in the study on a voluntary basis. The data were analyzed by content analysis technique. As a result; it was seen athletes draw on the theme of basketball as "sports, being an element of gain and emotion."

**Keywords:** Basketball, Sport, Metaphor, Perception, Sport Schools

## 1. Introduction

The concept of sports is associated with social, economic, political and cultural aspects (Ergun, 2003). Sports are known to be adopted as tools that involve not only competition but also activities such as voluntarily participating in games and dance in terms of entertainment and sports activities. While the individual's physical structure develops healthily thanks to the sports activities in which he or she participates before and after puberty, positive changes occur in her or his mental development at the same time (Yazarer et al., 2004). In this regard, sports can also be defined as a social event that contributes to the physical and mental development of individuals through a variety of positive effects (Doğan, 2007). Since sports play a significant role in the socialization of individuals, the phenomenon of sports, which allows children to be more social, is approached from a positive perspective by families, and children are encouraged to turn to the areas they are interested in (Çakmaklı, 2002).

Basketball, a sports discipline that requires constant mobility and concentration of the body and intelligence together (Bektaş et al., 2007), with high physical, technical-tactical, biomotoric and psycho-mental characteristics, contributes to the shaping and development of the existing motoric features of individuals as well

as their technical skills (Drinkwater et al., 2008; Kılınç, 2008). Young athletes who endeavour to fulfill their responsibilities in the specific discipline are expected to be the athletes who can perform physically well, apply technique effectively, and are in good mental shape. Triggs et al. (2011) emphasized that metaphors can be applied to overcome the challenges brought by changing conditions in both daily life and career.

Saban et al. (2006) define metaphor as a powerful mental tool that individuals can use to comprehend and explain a highly abstract, complex or theoretical phenomenon, on the other hand, Kesić and Muhić (2013) describe sports metaphors as the intersection of collective thought and wisdom obtained with a concise and metaphorical expression. According to Schmitt (2005), metaphors can be used to clarify multiple heterogeneous pieces of information with complex meaningful structures and transform this complexity into structured models. Visual metaphors/drawings, on the other side, are described as 'simple' yet powerful ways to obtain in-depth information about significant experiences in order to better comprehend conceptual perceptions (Tidwell & Manke, 2009).

When the literature is analyzed, there are different metaphor studies for concepts such as sports, sports disciplines, physical education and sports, physical education teacher and game (Arpa, 2014; Ayyıldız, 2016; Dursun Karakaya & Salici, 2016; Gülay et al., 2010; Hohepa et al., 2006; Koç et al., 2015; Pekel et al., 2019; Şirin et al., 2012; Tok, 2018; Triggs et al., 2011). Studies that identify players' perceptions about their own sports discipline concepts are rare in sports disciplines. Şirin et al. (2012) conducted research to examine the metaphorical perceptions of rafting participants towards the notion of rafting. Arpa (2014) investigated the reasons why secondary school sportsman students in Turkey were interested in karate and taekwondo, as well as their expectations from these sports. Dursun Karakaya and Salici (2016) conducted a study with the goal of determining the metaphorical perceptions of 11-14 age group students studying in Isparta towards popular sports disciplines.

Even though there are rare studies in which the perceptions of athletes about concepts and metaphors are determined in terms of disciplines, no metaphor study in basketball has been conducted through drawings. Given that metaphor is one of the tools to be used to measure and/or evaluate children's emotions and perceptions about participation in basketball, the study will contribute to the literature in terms of the approach of coaches and families to young athletes, the guidance of metaphor analysis in determining their needs, the approach to young athletes, and federations and families' meeting the needs when necessary. Hence, the aim of this study is to ascertain the metaphorical perceptions and drawings of 7 to 12 year old basketball players toward the concept of basketball.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Research Design*

A phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this study to determine the perceptions of children who receive basketball training in sports schools through metaphors and drawings. This research method aims to reveal perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic way in their natural environment (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006).

### *2.2. Participants*

In this study, the research sample was chosen by the convenience sampling method. A total of 60 athletes, 41 boys and 19 girls, between the ages of 7 to 12, attending basketball sports in Ankara in the 2020-2021 season participated in this research. Nevertheless, data analyses were performed on 55 participants as a consequence of the elimination of the forms of those who did not want to participate in the study, whose metaphors did not make any sense or whose forms were empty.

### 2.3. Data Collection Technique

The data collection tool was applied by the researchers themselves with the permission of the parents and club trainers. Additionally, all participants were involved in the study on a voluntary basis. The data collection tool comprised of two sections. While, in the first section, demographic characteristics of the participants such as gender, class and age which will contribute to the interpretation of the research's findings were included; in the second section, in order to determine the perceptions of the children who receive basketball training in the sports schools participating in the research about the concept of basketball through metaphors, research data were collected through the children's completing the sentence "Basketball is like/similar to ....; because ....." and drawing a picture reflecting their thoughts on the concept of basketball in the space given. Athletes were asked to explain their metaphor logically with the phrase "because" and were also given sufficient time to complete their drawings. Athletes were not restricted with their usage of pencils and paint. Special care was taken not to utilize any guiding expressions while explaining what to do to the participants.

#### 2.3.1. Data Evaluation

The data in this study was evaluated using the content analysis technique. Content analysis is the process of coding and quantization (digitization) what people say and write according to clear instructions (Patton, 2014). The metaphors and drawings collected for the data analysis were numbered from 1 to 55 and analyzed one at a time. The coding was done by considering the explanations about basketball. During the coding, a code list was created based on the meanings of the metaphors. Thus, by examining the relationship between these codes, it was attempted to make the data meaningful by reaching the categories that could best explain the feature. Metaphors are frequently used in qualitative research due to their features such as helping to deal with the diversity of research data (easiness of creating categories), establishing connections between data and presenting the data to the reader (Sadık & Sari, 2012). Methods of submitting the data and analyses to the control of the participants as well as consulting the interpretations of the data and analyses to experts were used to assure the validity and reliability of qualitative research (Ekiz, 2009). Besides, the themes, developed by two experts from outside of the research and the researcher who conducted the research, were compared; and the numbers of consensus and disagreement were determined in the comparisons, and the reliability of the research was calculated using the formula ( $\text{Reliability} = \text{Consensus} / \text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement}$ ) proposed by (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In qualitative studies, a desired level of reliability is achieved when the consistency between expert and researcher evaluations is 90% or higher (Saban, 2008). The percentages of consistency of the drawings were found to be gathered under the same themes at a rate of 91. As another reliability method, direct quotations were made by including the expressions of athletes used to explain the metaphors.

#### 2.3.2. Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel database programs. Frequency and percentage values were calculated for the themes found. Pictures with similar meanings were grouped into five themes: being an element of achievement, element of emotion, element of entertainment, element of socialization and being an element of sports. Personal information indicating which participant the drawings belong to was numbered below the examples. As a consequence of the analysis, the metaphors were classified into relevant themes based on their differences and similarities and transformed into tables. Also, the drawings created by children attending basketball schools regarding the concept of basketball were evaluated under certain codes and themes according to their common features, and numerical data about them was presented.

## 3. Results

A few samples of the drawings are given. Table 1 shows the conceptual themes of the drawings. It was observed that there were the same codes under certain themes (Table 1). Since the metaphors in these codes had varied meanings, they were placed in different themes. For instance, the code was included in the theme of "Element of Achievement" as participant 25 pointed out the "life" metaphor with the explanation "Basketball is like/similar to life because we always have to strive to achieve something, even if we can't achieve, we must strive."

Participant 35 used the metaphor of “life” with the explanation that “Basketball is like/ similar to life because it is a part of you, you can sleep with it and wake up with it, your future depends on it”; therefore, the code was included in the theme of “Element of Emotion.”

Table 1: Conceptual themes of the drawings made by the athletes for the concept of basketball

Conceptual Themes	f	%
Element of achievement	14	25
Element of emotion	12	21
Element of entertainment	7	12.5
Element of socialization	6	10.9
Element of sport	16	29
Total	55	100

### 3.1. Basketball as an Element of Sport

It was observed that children drew mostly on the themes of “Element of Sports” (f=16, 29%) and the least on the themes of “Element of Friendship” (f=6, 10.9%) (Table 1). The “Sports” theme had 16 drawings (29%) (Figure 1). In the concepts of sports, the theme most frequently drawn by children, it has been found that children who play basketball were in constant touch with the team, the players and the materials specific to the basketball that they love, and they draw the ball figure that they associated with basketball.

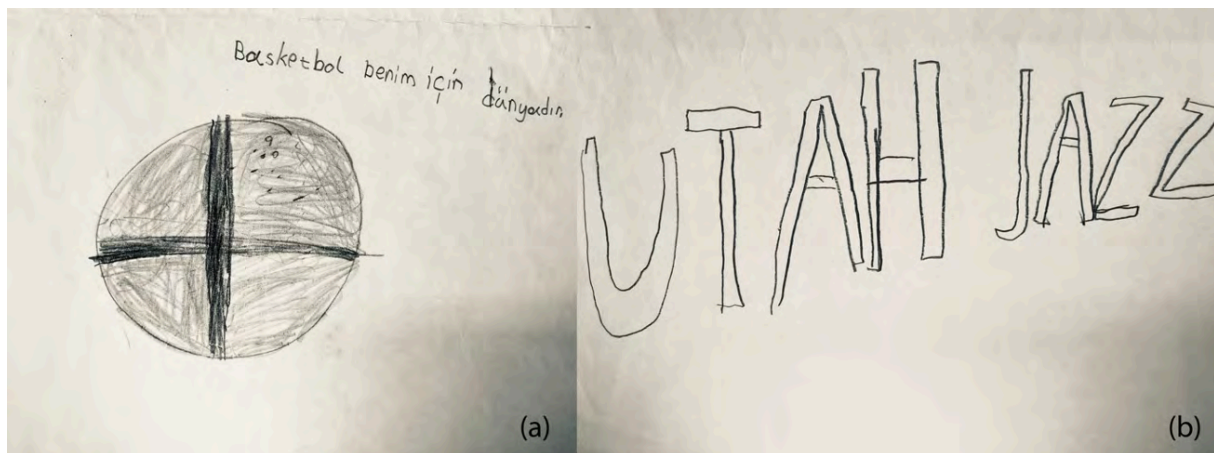


Figure 1(a-b): Drawings on the Theme of Sports Element

Participant 33 (Figure 1a) not only demonstrated how significant basketball was in the athlete’s life but also, they added the note “Basketball is the world for me.” to the participant’s drawing, indicating its meaning in her or his life. Additionally, participant 37 (Figure 1b) drew the name of her or his favorite team, which they loved watching, and remarked on how important it was to her or him.

### 3.2. Basketball as an Element of Achievement

Aside from the physical development provided by movement and high heart rate exercise, the contribution to psychological and personal development was emphasized in this element (Malm et al., 2019). In fact, this development was noticed not only by the participant but also by the people around them such as parents who witness this process closely. Some examples of metaphors created by children were as follows:

“Basketball is like/similar to a test; because you study diligently to get a good score in an exam, and the same goes for basketball.” (Participant 49)

“Basketball is like/similar to success; because in basketball believing is more than half of the success. If we believe in ourselves, we can achieve it; even if it is difficult.” (Participant 50)

“Basketball is like/similar to school; because basketball does not just teach you to play sports and basketball, it is like school that teaches you the life. I am sure that knowing about success and failure as well as being a team will help us in our lives.” (Participant 29)

14 (25%) drawings were included in the achievement theme (Table 1).

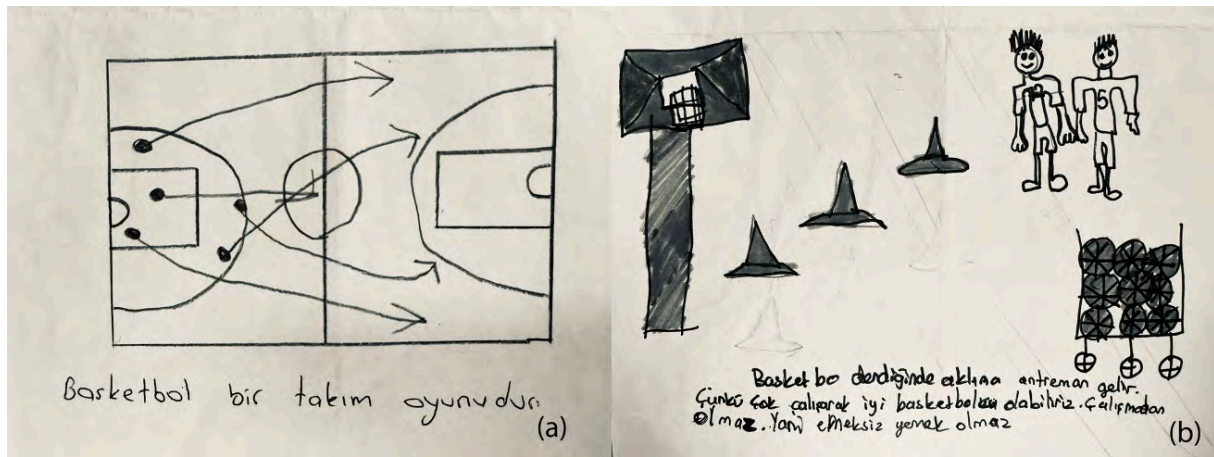


Figure 2(a-b): Drawings on the Theme of Achievement Element

Participant 34 (Figure 2a) illustrated the features of the basketball court and that basketball is a team game and it has a strategy with the help of arrows in the drawing. Participant 32 (Figure 2b) reflected the practice drills during basketball training, her or his knowledge of the variety of basketball training and the importance of working hard to achieve it by putting a note under the drawing.

### 3.3. Basketball as an Element of Emotion

Aside from the individual benefits, doing sports can help individuals enhance their self-confidence and better comprehend the meaning of life by balancing work and daily life, which affects the individual psychologically and sociologically (Roy, 2016). Some examples of metaphors created by children were as follows:

“Basketball is like/similar to calming; When I come here, I feel calm, happy and excited.” (Participant 2)

“Basketball is like/similar to an enjoyable sport: as when I come to the basketball court, the desire to win makes me proud, that’s why I love basketball.” (Participant 24)

“Being an Element of Emotion” was noted in 12 (21%) drawings of children (Table 1). Children described the concept of basketball as a time when they feel happy with their friends and experience the emotions of success.

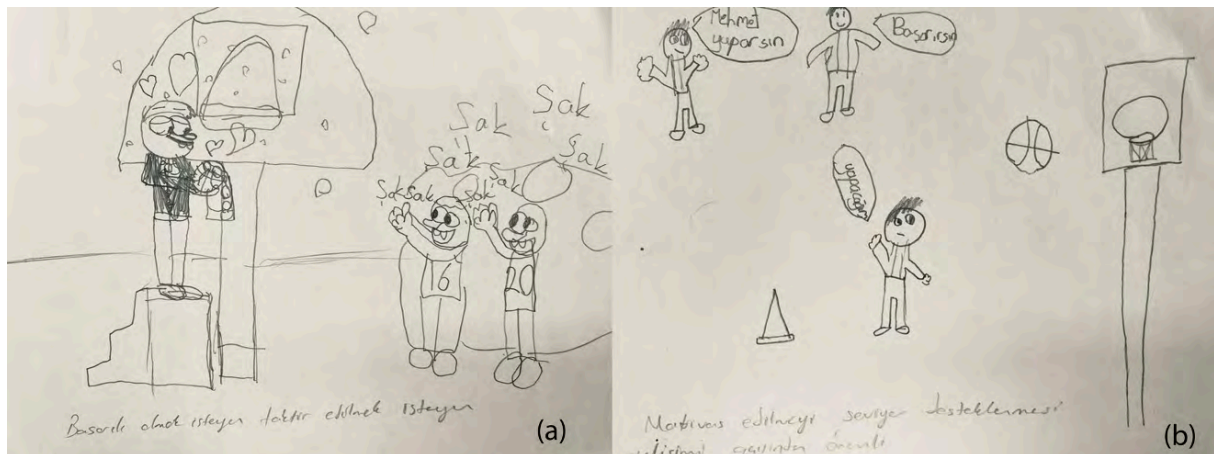


Figure 3(a-b): Drawings on the Theme of Emotion Element

Participant 14 (Figure 3a) drew children figures to demonstrate the happiness brought by the success they achieved at the end of the struggle with her or his friends. Participant 50 (Figure 3b) drew a picture of himself

and his coach speaking during the basketball training. When we observe the drawing carefully, we can see concretely how motivating the participant vocally benefits her or him.

### 3.4. Basketball as an Element of Entertainment

The drawings were noticed to be centered on the pictures of happy children playing basketball. It has been observed that children view the concept of basketball as a time when they enjoy playing and feel happy. Some samples of metaphors created by children are given below.

*“Basketball is like/similar to entertainment because I feel free when I go there.” (Participant 6)*

*“Basketball is like/similar to playing a game; because it is a very fun sport and important sport for height growth.” (Participant 1)*

In children’s drawings, “Being an Element of Entertainment” was seen in 7 (12,5%) drawings (Table 1).

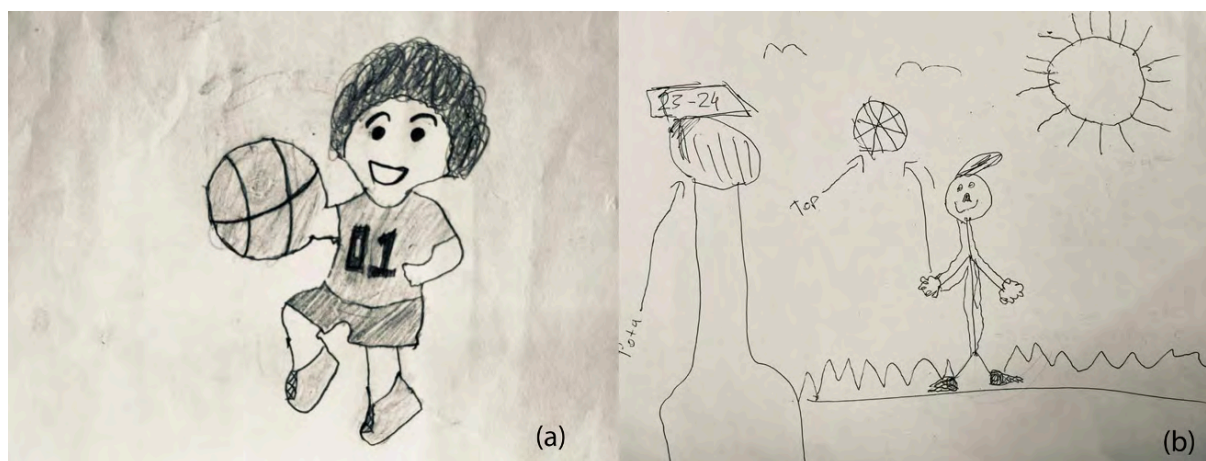


Figure 4(a-b): Drawings on the Theme of Entertainment Element

Upon examining the drawings of participants 40 and 49 (Figures 4a and 4b), it can be seen that they drew figures of children having fun while playing basketball. We can state that the happy facial expressions of the characters in drawings are concrete examples of how playing basketball entertains them.

### 3.5. Basketball as an Element of Socialization

6 (10,9%) drawings were included in this theme (Table 1). According to the evaluations, the drawings were mostly under the element of fun and friendship. Participant 9 stated in the metaphor that “Basketball is like/similar to friendship for me; because I learned basketball while playing with my friend, I always play basketball with her/him and I have a lot of fun.” In their drawings, the children depicted basketball as the time when they felt happy as they were having fun with their friends.

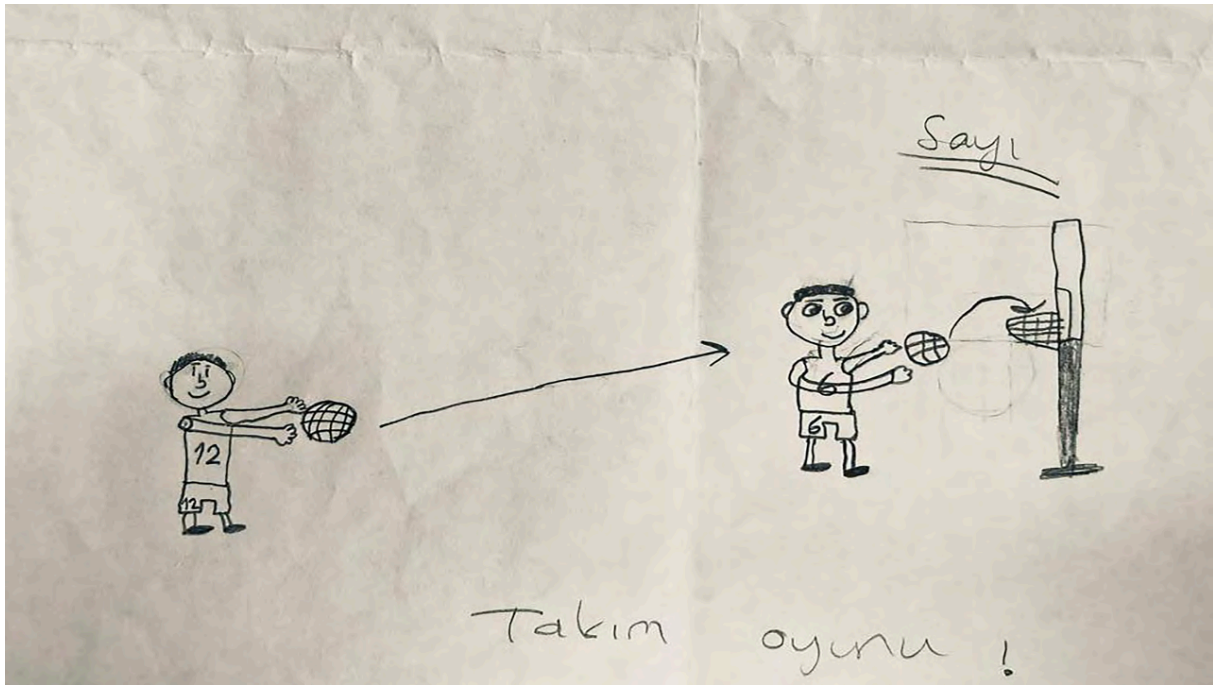


Figure 5: Drawings on the Theme of Socialization Element

Participant 31 (Figure 5) wrote the “Team game” note under the drawing they made. Similarly, participant 26 can be said to consider basketball as a socialization tool, recognizing that it is a team sport, with the metaphor of “Learning how to play basketball is like/similar to a game, those who know how to play can play it on the computer or with friends face-to-face.” and also think of digital game platforms as a tool for their socialization nowadays.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The feelings and thoughts of 7- to 12-year-old children attending basketball sports schools concerning the concept of basketball were investigated in this study using metaphors and drawings used by researchers and educators to serve different purposes.

While drawings containing materials used for the specific basketball were usually observed in the drawings of the participants, happy human figures playing games with their peers and having fun were encountered in these drawings, as well. Thus, with the support of the size of the materials they draw and the figures including positive energy such as the sun, children, who have to spend most of their time in front of electronic devices such as computers, tablets and televisions at home due to the global epidemic, define basketball as a relaxing activity that takes away from the cognitive fatigue of lessons and daily life. Similarly, through metaphors, they indicated that students accepted sports as a tool for a healthy life, a valuable element and a significant factor in their socialization (Koç et al., 2015) and associated it directly with life as sports disciplines are a part of life (Şirin et al., 2012).



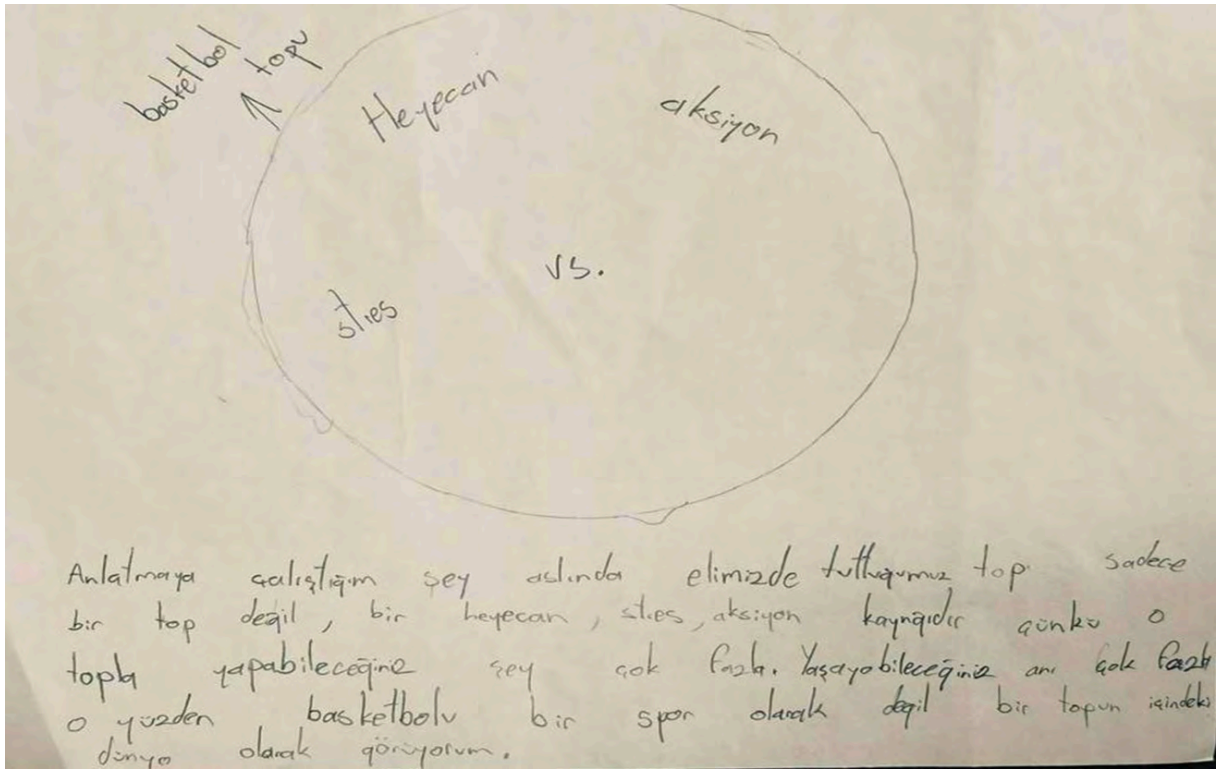


Figure 6: Drawings on the Theme of Socialization Element

Upon the explanation of Participant 38 (Figure 6) “What I am trying to explain is not a ball we hold in our hands, but a source of excitement, stress and action because there is so much, we can do with that ball, I see basketball as a world inside a ball, rather than a sport.”, it can be stated that basketball not only supports the physical development of children’s lives but also supports them socially and mentally. In a study conducted by (Triggs et al., 2011), it was concluded that since young athletes had the chance to express their thoughts and feelings through metaphors, a positive development was achieved in terms of communication and that the athletes were able to create meaning against changing conditions, which supports the findings of our research. Participating in sports provides a wide range of psychological, social, emotional and physiological benefits (Crocker, 2015; McArdle et al., 2010). It also offers individuals the experiences such as establishing good relationships, obeying rules and decisions along with the socialization process (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995; Rubin et al., 2006). The studies support the findings of our research. Pekel et al. (2019)’s study with 58 gifted students stated that they combined the concept of game and sports, they were happy because they did sports while playing the game, they offered physical development and spending time with their friends made them happy. Another study found that secondary school students viewed physical education lessons as a playground and entertainment area where they can do sports (Karaşahinoğlu & İlhan, 2019). The physical education lesson, which is the primary application point of basketball in schools, is in line with the studies that students perceive the sports activities they do in the lesson as a field of play and entertainment. Upon observing the findings of another research, the emphasis on the socializing aspect of the physical education lesson confirms the results of our research (Hohepa et al., 2006). Basketball has a significant contribution to many areas of development, especially physical health. When the metaphors of the participants were observed, under the theme of achievement, children’s basic knowledge of the basketball, its similarities with different sports disciplines and the impact of basketball on learning with metaphors such as exam and mathematics were also emphasized. The fact that children highlighted this concept of basketball demonstrates that they have an awareness of this issue. Basketball is primarily an educational tool as well as it is a game and physical development tool. This educational tool is an element that is frequently used in various fields from the past to the present in transferring any emotion or thought to individuals and plays an active part in life skills (Gedik & Tekin, 2015; Sheridan et al., 2010). In the drawings, we can observe that children learn the concepts given under values education in schools by experiencing them through applied training thanks to sports. The results of the study conducted by Demiral and Demir (2018) confirms the achievement of values education through applied training in this

research. As children cannot play enough games during the day, it is important to arrange basketball and other areas where they practice sports activities in a way that attracts the athletes' attention, meets their expectations and keep their interests alive. Moreover, it is advised to direct children to any clubs where they can play basketball.

It has been observed that children try to explain the concept of basketball by using affective images. It is worth noting that metaphors such as "art, proving ourselves, life, fun, enjoy, happiness, chameleon, excitement, happiness, peace, calming" were used to express the concept of basketball. For instance, participant 9 noted that "Basketball is like/similar to art since it is also done with love." Goleman (2017) defines the role of emotions and states that emotional intelligence inspires not only to achieve better but also to begin an activity enthusiastically, even if it is a challenging task. Regarding the structural characteristics of basketball, the fact that children feel some emotions at a high level while playing basketball can explain the frequent use of these metaphors.

Because of the current global epidemic, in addition to the sedentary lifestyle and digital phenomena that children are exposed to, it is highly recommended to increase other social activities in which children can participate in their spare time and direct them to physical activities. It has been highlighted that the family's commitment to sports, as well as athletes' participation in training, are crucial for development (Ferguson et al., 2019). Furthermore, Balaguer et al. (2012) indicated that changes in athletes' perceptions of their coaches' behaviour predict changes in athletes' well-being. Given the significance of sports to all individuals, it is thought that the study will contribute to trainers and federations, not only as a means of physical development, but also enabling children to reveal their potential with their mental development and desires, and also to define what they anticipate from the sport. It is encouraged to examine different sport disciplines and conduct various studies with different age groups and licensed athletes in sports by doing wider research on this issue in order to benefit from the positive impacts it provides.

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