METAPHORICAL PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR ECONOMICS AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF ELDERLY

Barış ÖZTUNA

Assistant Professor, Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations,
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Çankırı Karatekin University, Çankırı,
TURKEY.

barisoz83@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the opinions that students studying in the Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations had on the concept of elderly, particularly in terms of the metaphors they created. The students were asked an open-ended question: "Elderly people are like ...., because ....", whereby they were expected to create a metaphor for the concept of the elderly. A qualitative design that involved metaphor analysis was applied for the study. Similar metaphors were gathered and categorized according to the subject. The study group included 123 students who were studying in the Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations. Of these 123 students, 121 had created 73 metaphors on the concept of elderly for evaluation. These metaphors were divided into the following 7 categories: i) elderly as educators and teachers, ii) elderly within the concept of family, iii) elderly as a commodity, iv) elderly as a positive/negative emotion recipient, v) elderly as a necessary element for society and life, vi) elderly as a complex and obscure factor, and vii) elderly as the representative of sensitivity, awareness and protectiveness. Most of the metaphors created by the participants fell under the categories of elderly as positive/negative emotion-recipient and elderly as educators and teachers.

Keywords: Elderly, Disadvantaged Groups, Social Policy, Metaphor Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Social policy is a science of balance, harmony and peace that aims at reforming the destructive effects of economic policies on people through social justice, producing measurements and policies on the class contradictions and conflicts within capitalist society (Kaya, 2014: 14). Social policy first emerged to address the problems between employees and employers, however, over time, it broadened to include different sections of society and various social problems, before reaching its full extent of addressing social order and social integrity. In effect, Social policy has led to the extension of its field and scope depending on the changing needs of society. Matters like social exclusion, discrimination, environmental issues, consumer rights, and social policies, as they relate to disadvantaged groups, including women, youth, children, elderly people, ex-convicts, immigrants, disabled people and other groups who fall under the category of third generation, have become important subjects of social policy (Bozkır Serdar, 2017: 5-6). Since the development of social policy is directly related to human rights and democracy, it is difficult to define the concept of social policy in such a way that includes all of its parts and the periods it covers (Tokol, 2013: 1).

Family and market, the two key concepts that Esping-Andersen used as his basis for the classification of welfare states, are helpful for understanding the concept of elderly in Turkey.

The importance of family as an actor in Turkey also makes the family's perception on elderly important. It is here, however, where there is a dilemma. Are the elderly people "in charge" or "problematic" in the family? This dilemma can be seen in the family structure, which has been transformed from a traditional, large family structure into a modern, nuclear family structure. In this regard, it is important to determine whether the characteristics of family structure, such as traditional, modern, large, and nuclear, function as important variables in the duration of the perception and administration of social welfare for elderly (Taşcı, 2016: 51). The data collected by Orb Media to determine the level of respect for the elderly of 150.000 individuals from 101 countries showed that the level of respect significantly varied from country to country. The top five countries with the highest scores were Hungary, Uzbekistan, Romania, Turkey and Pakistan, respectively (Rendon & Terry, 2018). Based on this information, it is clear that respect for the elderly is an important value in Turkey.

Metaphors are figures of speech that contribute to how reality is understood and are therefore important tools in learning information. In addition, they exist in pure information, emerge from it, and have the quality of storing and supporting it (Alpaslan Danışman, 2015: 60-61). Metaphors can be regarded as analogies and simulations that guide and make it easier to understand abstract and obscure elements (Akman et al., 2017: 145). They are thought of as the tools that people use in trying to explain life, environment, events and objects by using various analogies (Cerit, 2008: 694). They (mimesis, figures of speech, figurative expressions and analogies) are one of the strongest mental tools for structuring, guiding and directing our thoughts governing the formation and operation of events (Saban, 2004).

This study aimed to identify the perceptions of the students in the Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations on the elderly. Designed as a qualitative study involving metaphor analysis, the students' perceptions on and images of the elderly were determined. The metaphors regarding the concept of elderly were identified through the written opinions of the participants. These metaphors were analyzed after classifying them under categories.

AIM

This research aims to explain the opinions of the students enrolled in the Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations based on the metaphors they created using their perceptions of the elderly.

METHOD

The study was designed as a qualitative study involving metaphor analysis. Metaphors regarding the concept of elderly were identified through the written opinions of the participants. These metaphors were analyzed by organizing them into categories.

Sample

The study population of the research included 123 students enrolled in the Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations at Çankırı Karatekin University in the 2017-2018 academic year. Of the 123 students, 121 created a valid metaphor regarding the concept of elderly.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the students based on gender.

Table 1: Participants' Distribution Based on Gender

Male (f)	Female (f)
34	87

Table 2 shows the distribution of the students based on their area of residence.

Table 2: Participants' Distributions Based on Their Area of Residence

Rural (f)	Urban (f)
29	92

Data Collection

The students from the Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations were asked to complete the sentence "Elderly people are like ...., because................" in terms of the concept of elderly. Students were given 30 minutes to create a metaphor. Of the 123 students, 121 created a valid metaphor regarding the concept of elderly.

Data Analysis

Unclear answers given to the question of "Elderly people are like ...., because..............." were omitted from analysis using coding and exclusion methods. Content analysis was used in this study. Themes were created by bringing similar concepts together. Similar metaphors were organized together and categorized according to subject after the data were analyzed.

Metaphors were analyzed in the following 4 phases: (1) data coding, (2) category formation, (3) data arrangement according to the given codes and categories, (4) ensuring validity and reliability (Akbaba Altun & Apaydın, 2013: 334).

FINDINGS

This section presents the metaphors created by the participants regarding the concept of elderly. A total of 7 conceptual categories were created. Table 3 shows the categories and metaphors created by the participants.

Table 3: Distribution of the Students' Metaphors Regarding the Concept of Elderly Based on Categories

Categories	Names of the Metaphors	Number of Metaphors	Frequency of the Metaphors (Number of Students =f)
Elderly as teachers and educators	Book (12), Teacher (2), Doctor (1), Master (1), School (1), Light (1), Sun (1), Ocean (1)	8	20
Elderly within the concept of family	Roof (1), Baby (1), Plane Tree (3), Lion (1), Child (1)	5	7
Elderly as a commodity	Tree (6), Plane Tree (5), Novel (1), Money-Box (1), Historical Artifact (1), Rooted Tree (1), Eraser (1), Gold (1), Book (2), A Growing Sapling (1)	10	20
Elderly as a positive/negative emotion-recipient	Privilege (1), Completed (1), End of the Road (1), Child(4), Stove (1), Candle (1), Universe (1), Cliff (1), Grumpy (1), A burden for the Government (1), Time(1), Wine (1), Hospital (1), In Need of Care(1), Deadwood (1), Abstract (1), Sunset(1), Iron (1), Lifeless (1), Warm Water (1), Memory (1)	21	24

Elderly as a necessary element for society and life	Plane Tree (4), Wise (3), Encyclopedia (1), Moon (1), Epic(1), A Blooming Prairie (1), Mountain (1), History (1), Fortune (1), Experience (1), Traffic Sign (1), True Path(1), Life (1), Light (1), Tree (1), Special (1)	16	21
Elderly as a complex and obscure element	Road (1), Long Story (1), A Big Mountain (1), An Efficient Person (1), Fall (1), Darkness with No End (1), Partly Cloudy Weather (1)	7	7
Elderly as the representative of sensitivity, awareness and protectiveness	Child (12), Baby (6), Pole (1), Tree of Life (1), Experienced Baby (1), Needy (1)	6	22
	TOTAL	73	121

This study was conducted with 123 students who were receiving daytime or evening education from the Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations. Of the students, 121 created a valid metaphor regarding the concept of elderly. These 121 students created 73 different metaphors.

Categories Formed Based on The Metaphors Regarding the Concept of Elderly

This section includes tables showing the metaphors created on the concept of elderly according to the categories established and the responses of the students.

Elderly as Teachers and Educators

Of the students, 20 created metaphors that perceive the elderly as teachers and educators. Table 4 presents these metaphors.

Table 4: Metaphors Forming the Concept of Elderly as Teachers and Educators

Metaphors	Frequency of the Metaphors (f)
Book	12
Teacher	2
Doctor	1
Master	1
School	1
Light	1
Sun	1
Ocean	1
TOTAL	20

The category of *Elderly as teachers and educators* included 8 metaphors as derived from 20 participants. Of these participants, 12 used ‘book’ as a metaphor for the elderly.

A student who used the “book” metaphor offered the following explanation:

EÖ1 *Elderly people are like books, because we benefit from their experiences and they enlighten us, just as books enlighten people.*

Other striking metaphors from this category that the participants offered included the following:

EÖ10 *Elderly people are like the sun, because they warm our hearts and enlighten us with their thoughts when we need them.*

EÖ11 *Elderly people are like an ocean, because there are a lot of living species in the ocean, whose water will never end. People always benefit from oceans. Even clouds absorb the water vapor from the surfaces of oceans and then it falls as rain on us. Elderly people's experiences and funds of knowledge are just like this phenomenon. We benefit from them whenever we need them.*

Elderly Within the Concept of Family

Among the students, 7 created metaphors that perceived the elderly as teachers and educators. Table 5 presents these metaphors.

Table 5: Metaphors Forming the Category of Elderly within the Concept of Family

Metaphors	Frequency of the Metaphors (f)
Roof	1
Baby	1
Plane Tree	3
Lion	1
Child	1
TOTAL	7

Under the *Elderly within the concept of family* category, there were 5 metaphors produced by 7 students. Most of these students viewed elderly as an element that brings the family together. Below are a couple of the students' metaphors from this category:

AK1 *Elderly people are like a roof, because they protect and unite the family.*

AK4 *Elderly people are like a lion, because they bring the family together and rule the family, just as a lion rules the jungle.*

Elderly as a Commodity

Some of the metaphors created by the participants show that elderly is thought as a commodity. Table 6 shows the metaphors that formed the category of *Elderly as a commodity*.

Table 6: Metaphors Forming the Category of Elderly as a Commodity

Metaphors	Frequency of the Metaphors (f)
Tree	6
Plane Tree	5
Novel	1
Money-box	1
Historical Artifact	1
Rooted Tree	1
Eraser	1
Gold	1
Book	2
A Growing Sapling	1
TOTAL	20

The *Elderly as a commodity* category included 10 metaphors, as expressed by 20 participants. Of these participants, 6 used 'tree' as a metaphor regarding the elderly. Below are a few of the metaphors from this category:

M3 *Elderly people are like trees, because there is still a child full of life in them although they grow old physically.*

M12 *Elderly people are like gold, because they are valuable and precious. They have a shining and warm heart*

M19: *Elderly people are like novels, because they last long. They have a certain life experience.*

Elderly as a Positive/Negative Emotion Recipient

Among the students, 24 created metaphors that perceived the elderly as a positive/negative emotion-recipient. Elderly people were characterized with 7 positive, 14 negative and 3 positive/negative emotions under this category. Table 7 presents these metaphors.

Table 7: Metaphors Forming the Category of Elderly as a Positive/Negative Emotion-Recipient

Metaphors	Positive	Negative	Both Positive and Negative	Metaphor Frequency (f)
Privilege	1	-	-	1
Completed	-	-	1	1
End of the Road	-	1	-	1
Child	-	4	-	4
Stove	-	-	1	1
Candle	-	1	-	1
Universe	1	-	-	1
Cliff	-	1	-	1
Grumpy	-	1	-	1
A Burden for the Government	-	1	-	1
Time	1	-	-	1
Wine	1	-	-	1
Hospital	-	1	-	1
In Need of Care	-	1	-	1
Deadwood	-	1	-	1
Abstract	-	1	-	1
Sunset	1	-	-	1
Iron	1	-	-	1
Lifeless	-	1	-	1
Warm Water	-	-	1	1
Memory	1	-	-	1
TOTAL	7	14	3	24

Below are a couple of the metaphors representing positive emotions from under this category:

OO6 *Elderly people are like the universe, because they include everything. They include so many good and bad experiences. They give peace, experience and power. And the best thing they give is the feeling of seeing oneself in the mirror through empathy.*

OO19 *Elderly people are like the sunset, because they create a happy and nice view at the end of a very long day.*

Some of the metaphors representing negative emotions are as follows:

OO3 *Elderly people are like children, because they never listen. Elderly people are broken. And this is because of the bad experiences that they had in the past.*

OO5 *Elderly people are like candles, because candles melt away as they burn. Elderly people also melt away slowly. They bend while burning.*

Some of the metaphors representing positive/negative emotions from this category are as follows:

OO4 *Elderly people are like a stove, because they are both hot and cold. They give peace, just like the stove gives peace with the specific smell of heat and coal.*

Elderly as a Necessary Element for Society and Life

Some of the metaphors offered by the students show that they view the elderly as a necessary element for society and life. Table 8 shows the metaphors that fell under the category of *Elderly as a necessary element for society and life*.

Table 8: Metaphors Forming the Category of Elderly as a Necessary Element for Society and Life

Metaphors	Frequency of the Metaphors (f)
Plane Tree	4
Wise	3
Encyclopedia	1
Moon	1
Epic	1
A Blooming Prairie	1
Mountain	1
History	1
Fortune	1
Experience	1
Traffic Sign	1
True Path	1
Life	1
Light	1
Tree	1
Special	1
TOTAL	21

Below are some of the metaphors offered by the participants under the category of *Elderly as a necessary element for society and life*:

TY1 *Elderly people are like plane trees that hold to the ground because they are the plane trees of this country. They hold to the ground and make us hold on to them. The more plane trees, the more pride we have.*

TY7 *Elderly people are like a blooming prairie, because they have years of experiences. If the elderly people of a nation are unhappy, all the individuals of that nation will be unhappy. We should look after elderly people.*

TY20 *Elderly people are like history. If you know your past, you can shape the future; however, it is hard to figure out.*

Elderly as a Complex and Obscure Element

Among the students, 7 created metaphors that perceived the elderly as a complex and obscure element. Table 9 presents these metaphors.

Table 9: Metaphors Forming the Category of Elderly as a Complex and Obscure Element

Metaphors	Frequency of the Metaphors (f)
Road	1
Long Story	1
A Big Mountain	1
Efficient Person	1
Fall	1
Darkness with No End	1
Partly Cloudy Weather	1
TOTAL	7

Below are a couple of the metaphors from this category:

KB1 *Elderly people are like a road, because you proceed as far as the distance you go.*

KB7 *Elderly people are like partly cloudy weather, because they are both happy and sad, they both give up on and hold on to life. Briefly, there sun shines but it is covered with clouds.*

Elderly as the Representative of Sensitivity, Awareness and Protectiveness

Some of the students offered metaphors viewing the elderly as representative of sensitivity, awareness and protectiveness. Table 10 presents these metaphors.

Table 10: Metaphors Forming the Category of Elderly as the Representative of Sensitivity, Awareness and Protectiveness

Metaphors	Frequency of the Metaphors (f)
Child	12
Baby	6
Pole	1
Tree of Life	1
Experienced Baby	1
Needy	1
TOTAL	22

The category of *Elderly as the representative of sensitivity, awareness and protectiveness* included 22 participants who offered 6 metaphors. Of these participants, 12 used a 'child' as a metaphor for the elderly. Below are some of the metaphors from this category:

HD1 *Elderly people are like children, they become delicate and fragile over time. Sometimes you need to explain a word to them over and over repeatedly.*

HD8 *Elderly people are like a baby, because they lose their functions slowly. They want attention from others and depend on somebody like a baby does.*

HD9 *Elderly people are like a baby, because they want attention, compassion, and mercy.*

Evaluation of the Metaphors Regarding the Concept of Elderly Based on the Students' Taking the Social Policy Course

This section examines the metaphors created by the students according to whether or not they had taken a course called Social Policy. Table 11 shows the metaphors regarding elderly that the participants who took the Social Policy course made.

Table 11: Categorization of the Concept of Elderly According to Participants' status of Having Taken the Social Policy Course

Categories	The Number of Students Who Took Social Policy Course (f)	The Number of Students Who Did Not Take Social Policy Course (f)
Elderly as teachers and educators	14	6
Elderly within the concept of family	6	1
Elderly as a commodity	17	3
Elderly as a positive/negative emotion recipient	22	2
Elderly as a necessary element for society and life	19	2
Elderly as a complex and obscure element	7	-
Elderly as the representative of sensitivity, awareness, and protectiveness	18	4
TOTAL	103	18

Among the students who participated in the study, 103 had taken the Social Policy course while 18 had not, as shown in Table 11. Those who had taken the Social Policy course primarily viewed the elderly as a positive/negative emotion-recipient from among the seven categories created. The following metaphors that they used mostly fell under the categories of *Elderly as a necessary element for society and life* and *Representative of sensitivity, awareness, and protectiveness*. Some of the metaphors offered by the participants who had taken the Social Policy course are as follows:

HD11 *Elderly people are like the needy, because elderly people are evaluated within the disadvantageous group and thus they need others' help in areas such as nursing and health.*

OO1 *Being elderly is like having a privilege, because even if you do not depend on insurance, the government provides you insurance after a certain age.*

OO15 *Elderly people are like an abstract entity, because they are known to exist, but they are ignored. Their rights or ideas remain in the background. They are regarded among those in the disadvantaged groups.*

Distributions of Participants According to Their Area of Residence

This section examines the categories of the metaphors regarding the elderly according to their area of residence.

Table 12: Categorization of the Participants' Metaphors According to Their Area of Residence

Categories	Rural (f)	Urban (f)
Elderly as teachers and educators	4	16
Elderly within the concept of family	2	5
Elderly as a commodity	5	15
Elderly as a positive/negative emotion recipient	4	20
Elderly as a necessary element for society and life	7	14
Elderly as a complex and obscure element	1	6
Elderly as the representative of sensitivity, awareness and protectiveness	6	16
TOTAL	29	92

Participants living in a rural area primarily created the metaphors of elderly as i) a necessary element for society and life and ii) the representative of sensitivity, awareness, and protectiveness. Those living in the urban area, on the other hand, primarily created the metaphors of the elderly as positive/negative emotion-recipient, followed by teachers and educators and the representative of sensitivity, awareness, and protectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the metaphorical perceptions of students from the Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations on the elderly. To realize this aim, an analysis of the metaphors applied by the students on the concept of elderly was conducted. The students were asked to create various metaphors regarding the concepts, and these analyzed metaphors were grouped into certain categories.

Among the 123 total students, 121 created 73 metaphors regarding the concept of elderly. These metaphors were grouped into 7 categories: i) elderly as educators and teachers, ii) elderly within the concept of family, iii) elderly as a commodity, iv) elderly as a positive/negative emotion-recipient, v) elderly as a necessary element for society and life, vi) elderly as a complex and obscure factor, and vii) elderly as the representative of sensitivity, awareness, and protectiveness.

Of the students who participated in the research, 103 had taken a Social Policy course, while 18 had not. Those who had taken a Social Policy course largely viewed the elderly as a positive/negative emotion-recipient among the seven categories. The metaphors that these students used mostly included regarding the elderly as a necessary element for society and life, and the representative of sensitivity, awareness, and protectiveness.

Participants living in rural areas created metaphors that mostly fell under the category of *Elderly as a necessary element for society and life*. However, those living in urban areas primarily created metaphors that fell under the category of elderly as a positive/negative emotion-recipient.

Most of the metaphors created by the participants fell under the category of *Elderly as a positive/negative emotion-recipient*. Under this category, 24 students produced 21 different metaphors. Of these students, 7 created metaphors derived from positive emotions, 14 created metaphors derived from negative emotions, and 3 created metaphors derived from a mix of positive/negative emotions.

Orb Media collected data to determine the level of respect for the elderly of 150.000 individuals from 101 countries. The data showed that the level of respect significantly varied from country to country. The five countries scoring the highest points were Hungary, Uzbekistan, Romania, Turkey and Pakistan, respectively (Rendon & Terry, 2018). From this it is clear that respect for the elderly is an important value in Turkey. The second most produced metaphor created for the elderly in this study fell under the category of *Teachers and educators*. A total of 20 participants created 8 metaphors under the category of the *Elderly as teachers and educators*. Under this category, these participants mostly applied a book metaphor regarding the elderly. Within the concept of family, the plane tree metaphor was mostly used. Under the category of the *Elderly as a positive/negative emotion recipient*, a child metaphor was mostly created, while under the category of the *Elderly as a necessary element for society and life*, a plain tree metaphor was created the most. Under the category of the *Elderly as a complex and obscure element*, 7 different metaphors were largely used. Lastly, a child metaphor was created under the category of the *Elderly as the representative of sensitivity, awareness, and protectiveness*.

REFERENCES

[1]. Akbaba, A., & Apayadın, Ç. (2013). Kız ve erkek öğretmen adaylarının "eğitim" kavramına ilişkin metaforik algıları. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Yönetimi Dergisi*, *19*(3), 329-354.

[2]. Akman, Ö., Özeren, E., & Yiğen, V. (2017). Öğretmenlerin "Okul" Kavramına İlişkin Metaforlarının İncelenmesi. *International Journal of Social Science Research*, *6* (2), 142-157.

[3]. Alpaslan, D. S. (2015). Metaforların örgüt ve yönetim araştırmalarındaki yeri: Ontolojik, epistemolojik ve metodolojik kabuller ışığında bir değerlendirme. *KAÜ İİBF Dergisi,* *6*(9), 45-64.

[4]. Bozkır, S., A. (2017). *Sosyal politika kavramı, tarihsel gelişimi ve türkiye'de sosyal politika*. Bursa: Dora Yayıncılık.

[5]. Cerit, Y. (2008). Öğretmen kavramı ile ilgili metaforlara ilişkin öğrenci, öğretmen ve yöneticilerin görüşleri. *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, *6*(4), 693-712.

[6]. Kaya, P. A. (2014). *Uluslararası sosyal politika teorisi, uluslararası çalışma normları ve güncel gelişmeler*. Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi.

[7]. Rendon, J., & Olufemi, T. (2018). *Age well attitudes matter in a graying world*. Retrieved from https://agewell.orbmedia.org/.

[8]. Saban, A. (2004). Giriş düzeyindeki sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının öğretmen kavramına ilişkin ileri sürdükleri metaforlar. *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, *2*, 135-155.

[9]. Taşcı, F. (2016). Refah devleti ve yaşlılık algısı: Türkiye üzerinden değerlendirmeler. Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık.

[10]. Tokol, A. (2013). *Uluslararası sosyal politika*. Bursa: Dora Yayıncılık.