

How do Undergraduates Conceptualize Campus? A Metaphor Analysis

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Abstract

This research examines how Turkish undergraduates construct “campus” metaphors to represent their opinions about campus phenomenon in the context of a Turkish university. The present study adopted a phenomenological approach. The participants of this study were 92 students in the 2020-2021 academic year from different faculties and departments at a university in Turkey. For data collection, a short interview form was used to reveal the perspectives of undergraduates on the phenomenon they have created in their minds for the campus. The form contained a statement with blanks for students to produce a simile and justification. The metaphors generated by the undergraduates are gathered under sixteen conceptual categories after the analysis of metaphors. Among the sixteen conceptual categories, there was no prominent difference in conceptualizations of campus between the groups in terms of study years as regards campus as “Involving diversities”, “Provider”, “Designing/manufacturing”, “Source of experience”, “Improver”, “Socializing force”, “Friendship”, “Belonging”, “Source of life”, “Source of different emotions”. On the other hand, differences in terms of study year were marked concerning campus as “Dynamic”, “Undesired”, “Trust”, “Valuable”, “Full of nature”, and “Having borders”. While Freshmen/Sophomores perceived campus as “Trust”, “Full of nature” but “Having borders”, Juniors/Seniors considered campus as “Dynamic”, valuable but “Undesired”. Among the sixteen conceptual categories, there was no difference in conceptualizations of campus between the two groups in terms of gender as regards campus as “Provider”, “Designing/manufacturing”, “Source of experience”, “Improver”, “Friendship”, “Belonging”, “Source of life”, “Source of different emotions”. Nevertheless, differences in terms of gender were marked concerning campus as “Socializing force”, “Dynamic”, “Undesired”, “Trust”, “Valuable”, “Full of nature”, and “Having borders”. Female students perceived campus as a “Socializing force”, “Dynamic”, “Trust”, “Valuable”, and “Full of nature” whereas a male student considered it as “Having borders” like a country.

Keywords: Campus, Undergraduates, Metaphor

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INTRODUCTION

The word “campus” was first used in the USA in the second half of the 18th century in Princeton and was defined as open spaces between university buildings (Gül, Keleş & Uzun, 2016). Today, a campus is identified as a settlement with indoor, outdoor and green areas providing their users with daily living conditions. A campus both hosts the educational and research-based functions of universities and offers a wide range of services such as administrative structuring, education, research, health, social and cultural activities, sports, recreation, food, beverage, and accommodation (Tatal, 2018).

University campuses as teaching, researching, and learning centers function as informal learning spaces forming the social dimension of learning with a wide range of learning environments (McLaughlin & Faulkner, 2012; Kärnä & Julin, 2015). Several roads, buildings, and spaces make up a physical environment of a campus where interaction between campus users and the physical environment is facilitated, which promotes and supports success (Paulsen & McCormick, 2020). Campus as an important phenomenon for higher education settings has a major influence on the feelings of the students, leading to a change in their behavior, manner, and standard of living as well (Hani, Nassar & Bakr, 2020). Campus engagement is believed to offer involvement in educationally purposeful activities outside the classroom; interaction with faculty and peers, which provides great intellectual content; integration of various curricular and co-curricular experiences (Jones, 2003). These practices are believed to ensure a supportive environment for students to “invest time and effort in activities associated with desired learning outcomes, interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters, experience diversity, and discover the relevance of their learning through real-world applications” (Kuh, 2011, p. 65).

Traditional general education programs during tertiary education imply advanced integrative studies and required participation in a learning community where different groups of students form social relations thanks to the campus environment which supports students academically and socially, in meeting nonacademic responsibilities, and encouraging a high standard of student relationships with student, faculty, and staff (Association of American Colleges and Universities; 2007; Kuh et al., 2005). Transactional interactions between individual of groups of students, faculty, and administrators, and the physical, perceived, and enacted environment of the university form the climates and cultures of campus and shape the students and shaped by them (Banning & Bryner, 2001; Flowers et al., 2015). As stated by Lefever (2012), the campus has an impact on belonging and inclusion, and it should be taken into account as a component to consider for student participation and overall student experience. Belonging and engagement are about more than just social relationships or classroom interaction; it’s about how people use spaces, how they feel when they’re in them, and how they’re considered catering to or assisting others.

Considering the potential of campus engagement to motivate and empower the student in high-impact learning opportunities and the current conditions of tertiary education as a result of COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions and hybrid models being experienced, we wanted to uncover how students perceive the “campus” phenomenon. Furthermore, to verbalize the opinions of undergraduates, metaphors were made use of since humans “perceive and experience much of the world” via metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 239). Snodgrass and Coyne (1992, p. 56) explain the phenomenon of metaphor as “the models conveying their meanings by way of a hermeneutical understanding and acts as a connector which links the structures of the theory with the structures of the explanandum, and transfers the concepts associated with one to the other”. Metaphors are used to generate unusual comparisons that go beyond the barriers of literal language (Bartel, 1983) and utilize a familiar object as a conceptual tool to illuminate the characteristics of a more complicated phenomenon (Oxford et al., 1998). Derived from the Greek with a meaning of transfer, a metaphor is the transference of one phenomenon to another (Snodgrass & Coyne, 1992). Metaphor is not only a language-grounded phenomenon, but also part of thought. Constructing a metaphor means “mapping across conceptual domains between entities in a source domain and entities in a target domain” (Lakoff, 1993, p. 42). Metaphors that can transcend the boundaries of scientific language and

description are used to communicate one's image of a situation to elucidate meaning in complicated settings (Provenzo et al., 1989). A metaphor is a useful instrument through which people can reveal the meaning of a phenomenon or situation (Goldstein, 2005).

In this present study, we aim to uncover how groups of Turkish undergraduates constructed personal "campus" metaphors (or metaphorical statements) to describe their opinions about campus. Becoming more knowledgeable about student perceptions on campuses with their students, faculties, staff, ecology, and the external environment can give us a good chance of contributing to the institutions' educational aims. It is expected that the student perception reached in this study will propose a new perspective of student conceptions of campus that will expand our sense of what a campus means to students with its various components.

The study intended to address the following questions:

1. What are the metaphors that Turkish undergraduates construct about the phenomenon of campus and under what conceptual categories are these metaphors collected in terms of common features?
2. Do these conceptual categories about campus differentiate between (a) genders and (b) students at different years of study?

METHOD

Phenomenology as a qualitative research design was preferred in the present study as our goal is to present a description and reach the essence of the experiences of a group of Turkish undergraduates on the phenomenon of campus. Phenomenology is a research design where the researcher explains the experiences of the participants about a phenomenon to reach the essence of their experiences about the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 2017).

Participants

The participants in this study were 92 students in the 2020-2021 academic year from different faculties and departments at a university in Turkey, of whom 65 were female and 27 were male. While the number of students in the freshman and sophomore years was 33, there were 59 junior and seniors in total.

Data Collection

For data collection, a short interview form was used to reveal the perspectives of undergraduates on the phenomenon they have created in their minds for the campus. Online interview forms were sent to the undergraduates asking about gender and the year of study. The form contained a statement with blanks for students to produce a simile and justification as "Campus is likebecause". The data collection procedure lasted about 2 weeks on April 2021. The pilot study was carried out with eight undergraduates beforehand.

Data analysis

In this study, we used metaphor analysis as a qualitative research tool whose "essence is a systematic generalization of participants' metaphorical language, to infer underlying conceptual metaphors, which ultimately provide some insights into participants' thought patterns and understandings of a given topic" (Wan, 2012, p. 33). During the analysis process, all metaphors pertinent to the same image source and describing the same target area are categorized into metaphorical concepts and similar concepts are formed in a constant and circular refinement of the data throughout the sorting process. Metaphorical idioms are proceeded with allocating to metaphorical concepts until all metaphors are classified under a concept (Schmitt, 2005). In the current

study, we first listed the data verbatim and organized the metaphors. The metaphors and justifications were examined carefully and similarities among metaphors are tried to be found to generate conceptual categories. In this stage, 118 collected metaphors were coded and categorized by three researchers independently, and then, in a negotiation, the final categorizations were reached. When literal statements and responses with no metaphorical reasoning were excluded, 92 metaphors were found analyzable.

The stage of ensuring validity and reliability

To ensure the validity of the research results, the data analysis process is explained in detail. In addition, sample metaphors that are assumed to best represent the sub-themes obtained from the metaphors were compiled and examples of these metaphors are given in the findings section. To ensure the reliability of the research, the metaphors were examined by three researchers at different times, and categories and themes related to the metaphors were created by each researcher independently. Afterward, the researchers discussed each metaphor and its rationale and completed the categories and themes.

FINDINGS

This section provides both representative metaphors and categories constructed according to campus perceptions of undergraduates and metaphors and categories provided by students separately under two tables: similarities and differences among study years and gender.

Campus Perceptions of Undergraduates

The metaphors created by university students regarding the phenomenon of “campus” and the findings related to the categories formed from these metaphors are given in Table 1.

Table 1 Representative Metaphors and Categories on Campus Perceptions of Undergraduates

Categories	Σf	Metaphor
Involving diversities	27	World (f: 7), Rainbow (f: 3), Arboretum (f: 1), City (f: 1), Cluster (f: 1), Country (f: 1), Family members (f: 1), Field (f: 1), Flower Garden (f: 1), Green grocer (f: 1), Home (f: 1), Human metabolism (f: 1), Meal (f: 1), Nature (f: 1), Ocean (f: 1), Painting (f: 1), Palette (f: 1), Street (f: 1), Woods (f: 1)
Provider	11	Home (f: 2), A small town (f: 1), Factory (f: 1), Fair (f: 1), Fun fair (f: 1), Library (f: 1), Mall (f: 1), Nature (f: 1), Pool (f: 1), Supermarket (f: 1)
Designing/ manufacturing	9	Factory (f: 4), Carpentry shop (f: 1), Sculptor workshop (f: 1), Sewing machine (f: 1), Vegetable garden (f: 1), Workshop (f: 1)
Source of experience	7	Life (f: 5), A small city (f: 1), Home (f: 1)
Improver	7	Science center (f: 2), Hospital (f: 2), Bus (f: 1), Informal trainer (f: 1), Kitchen (f: 1)
Socializing force	7	Recreational facility (f: 2), Cafe (f: 1), Farm (f: 1), Palette (f: 1), Park (f: 1), Social media (f: 1)
Friendship	4	Home (f: 3), Sibling (f: 1)
Belonging	4	Home (f: 4)
Dynamic	4	Anthill (f: 1), Funfair (f: 1), The circulatory system (f: 1), Spring (f: 1)
Source of life	3	Field (f: 1), Oxygen (f: 1), Woods (f: 1)
Source of different emotions	2	Funfair (f: 1), Rain (f: 1)
Undesired	2	Family house (f: 1), Museum (f: 1)
Trust	2	Home (f: 2)
Valuable	1	Treasure chest (f: 1)
Full of nature	1	Park (f: 1)
Having borders	1	Country (f: 1)

Table 1 shows that 92 students constructed 53 different metaphors regarding the phenomenon of “campus”. The metaphors of “Involving diversities” (f: 27), “Provider” (f: 11), “Designing/manufacturing” (f: 9), “Source of experience” (f: 7), “Improver” (f: 7), “Socializing force”

(f: 7), “Friendship” (f: 4), “Belonging” (f: 4), “Dynamic” (f: 4), “Source of life” (f: 3), “Source of different emotions” (f: 2), “Undesired” (f: 2), “Trust” (f: 2), “Valuable” (f: 1), “Full of nature” (f: 1), and “Having borders” (f: 1) were gathered under sixteen categories.

Under the largest category of “Involving diversities”, 19 different metaphors (world, rainbow, arboretum, city, cluster, country, family members, field, flower garden, greengrocer, home, human metabolism, meal, nature, ocean, painting, palette, street, woods) were generated by 27 students. 10 different metaphors (home, a small town, factory, fair, funfair, library, mall, nature, pool, supermarket) by 11 students under the “Provider” category; 6 different metaphors (factory, carpentry shop, sculptor workshop, sewing machine, vegetable garden, workshop) by 9 students under the category of “Designing/manufacturing” were generated, respectively. 7 students generated 3 different metaphors (life, a small city, home), under the category of “Source of experience” and 7 students produced 5 different metaphors (science center, hospital, bus, informal trainer, kitchen) under the category of “Improver”. 6 different metaphors (recreational facility, cafe, farm, palette, park, social media) by 7 students were reached under the category of “Socializing force”. Also 2 different metaphors (home, sibling) by 4 students under the category of “Friendship”; 1 metaphor (home) by 4 students under “Belonging” category; 4 different metaphors (anthill, funfair, the circulatory system, spring) by 4 students under the category of “Dynamic”, 3 different metaphors (field, oxygen, woods) by 3 students under the category of “Source of life”, 2 different metaphors (funfair, rain) by 2 students under the category of “Source of different emotions”, 2 different metaphors (family house, museum) by 2 students under the category of “Undesired”, 1 metaphor (home) by 1 student under the category of “Trust”, 1 metaphor (treasure chest) by 1 student under “Valuable” category, 1 metaphor (park) by 1 student under “Full of nature” category, and 1 metaphor (country) by 1 student under the category of “Having borders” were generated.

Some sample expressions from the answers of the students, which are the sources for the formation of the categories, are given below.

“Campus is like the world because it involves people with diverse cultural backgrounds” (S17)

“Campus is like a mall because it provides whatever we need” (S47).

“Campus is like a sewing machine because it measures, unites, and shapes the individual who will benefit society in the future” (S46).

“Campus is like a hospital it recovers us from illiteracy” (S12).

“Campus is like life because we experience lots of things there” (S50).

2.2 Similarities and Differences among Study Years

The findings regarding the comparison of the metaphors created by undergraduates and the categories formed from these metaphors regarding the phenomenon of “campus” in terms of study year are given in Table 2.

Table 2 Similar and Differing Metaphors Used by the Students in the Different Study Years.

Categories	Σ f	Metaphors	
		Freshmen/Sophomores	Juniors/Seniors
Involving diversities	27	World (f: 4), City (f: 1), Cluster (f: 1), Field (f: 1), Meal (f: 1), Rainbow (f: 1), Woods (f: 1)	World (f: 3), Rainbow (f: 2), Arboretum (f: 1), Family members (f: 1), Home (f: 1), Human metabolism (f: 1), Nature (f: 1), Ocean (f: 1), Painting (f: 1), Country (f: 1), Flower Garden (f: 1), Green grocer (f: 1), Street (f: 1), Palette (f: 1)
Provider	11	A small town (f: 1), Factory (f: 1), Home (f: 1), Nature (f: 1)	Home (f: 1), Library (f: 1), Pool (f: 1), Supermarket (f: 1), Fair (f: 1), Fun fair (f: 1), Mall (f: 1)
Designing/ manufacturing	9	Carpentry shop (f: 1), Vegetable garden (f: 1), Factory (f: 1), Workshop (f: 1)	Factory (f: 3) Sculptor workshop (f: 1), Sewing machine (f: 1)
Source of experience	7	A small city (f: 1), Home (f: 1)	Life (f: 5)
Improver	7	Science center (f: 1)	Hospital (f: 1), Informal trainer (f: 1), Science center (f: 1), Bus (f: 1), Hospital (f: 1), Kitchen (f: 1)
Socializing force	7	Cafe (f: 1), Recreational facility (f: 1)	Farm (f: 1), Palette (f: 1), Park (f: 1), Recreational facility (f: 1), Social media (f: 1)
Friendship	4	Home (f: 2), Sibling (f: 1)	Home (f: 1)
Belonging	4	Home (f: 1)	Home (f: 3)
Dynamic	4		Anthill (f: 1), Funfair (f: 1) Spring (f: 1), The circulatory system (f: 1)
Source of life	3	Woods (f: 1)	Oxygen (f: 1) Field (f: 1)
Source of different emotions	2	Rain (f: 1)	Funfair (f: 1)
Undesired	2		Family house (f: 1) Museum (f: 1)
Trust	2	Home (f: 2)	
Valuable	1		Treasure chest (f: 1)
Full of nature	1	Park (f: 1)	
Having borders	1	Country (f: 1)	

Table 2 shows that among the sixteen conceptual categories, there was no prominent difference in conceptualizations of campus between the two student groups in terms of study years as regards campus as “Involving diversities”, “Provider”, “Designing/manufacturing”, “Source of experience”, “Improver”, “Socializing force”, “Friendship”, “Belonging”, “Source of life”, “Source of different emotions”. On the other hand, differences in terms of study years were marked concerning campus as “Dynamic”, “Undesired”, “Trust” “Valuable”, “Full of nature”, and “Having borders”. While Freshmen/Sophomores perceived campus as trust, full of nature but having borders, Juniors/Seniors considered campus as dynamic, valuable but undesired. It is notable in Table 2 that a prominent difference in interpretations of the campus between the groups was spotted in the category of “Dynamic” metaphors.

Similarities and Differences between Gender

The findings regarding the comparison of the metaphors created by undergraduates and the categories formed from these metaphors regarding the phenomenon of “campus” in terms of gender are given in Table 3.

Table 3 Similar and Differing Metaphors Used by Female and Male Students.

Categories	Σf	Metaphor	
		Female	Male
Involving diversities	27	World (f: 3), Rainbow (f: 2), City (f: 1), Cluster (f: 1), Country (f: 1), Family members (f: 1), Field (f: 1), Flower Garden (f: 1), Green grocer (f: 1), Home (f: 1), Meal (f: 1), Nature (f: 1), Ocean (f: 1), Palette (f: 1), Woods (f: 1)	World (f: 4), Arboretum (f: 1), Human metabolism (f: 1), Painting (f: 1), Rainbow (f: 1), Street (f: 1)
Provider	11	Home (f: 2), A small town (f: 1), Factory (f: 1), Fair (f: 1), Library (f: 1), Mall (f: 1), Pool (f: 1), Supermarket (f: 1)	Fun fair (f: 1), Nature (f: 1)
Designing/manufacturing	9	Carpentry shop (f: 1), Factory (f: 1), Sculptor workshop (f: 1)	Factory (f: 4), Sewing machine (f: 1), Vegetable garden (f: 1), Workshop (f: 1)
Impression/ source of experience	7	Life (f: 3), A small city (f: 1), Home (f: 1)	Life (f: 2)
Improver	7	Science center (f: 2), Informal trainer (f: 1), Kitchen (f: 1)	Hospital (f: 2), Bus (f: 1)
Socializing force	7	Recreational facility (f: 2), Cafe (f: 1), Farm (f: 1), Palette (f: 1), Park (f: 1), Social media (f: 1)	
Friendship	4	Home (f: 2), Sibling (f: 1)	Home (f: 1)
Belonging	4	Home(f: 4)	
Dynamic	4	Anthill (f: 1), Funfair (f: 1), The circulatory system (f: 1), Spring (f: 1)	
Source of life	3	Woods (f: 1)	Field (f: 1), Oxygen (f: 1)
Source of different emotions	2	Funfair (f: 1)	Rain (f: 1)
Undesired	2	Family house (f: 1)	Museum (f: 1)
Trust	2	Home (f: 2)	
Valuable	1	Treasure chest (f: 1)	
Full of nature	1	Park (f: 1)	
Having borders	1		Country (f: 1)

Table 3 shows that among the sixteen conceptual categories, there was no difference in conceptualizations of campus between the two groups as regards campus as “Involving diversities”, “Provider”, “Designing/manufacturing”, “Source of experience”, “Improver”, “Friendship”, “Source of life”, “Source of different emotions”, and “Undesired”. Nevertheless, differences in terms of gender were marked concerning campus as “Socializing force”, “Belonging”, “Dynamic”, “Trust”, “Valuable”, “Full of nature”, and “Having borders”. Female students perceived campus as a “Socializing force”, “Belonging”, “Dynamic”, “Trust”, “Valuable”, and “Full of nature” whereas a male student considered it as “Having borders” like a country. It is notable in Table 3 that a major difference in interpretations of the campus between the groups was identified in the categories of “Socializing force” and “Dynamic” metaphors.

DISCUSSION

As one of the important dynamics of social development, universities are educational institutions with a respected position all over the world (Saylık & Saylık, 2021), “devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, the solution of problems, and the training of men at a really high level” (Flexner, 1994, p. 42). Students not only gain their professions via educational activities at university but also develop themselves socially and culturally there (Erçevik & Önal, 2011).

Generally, universities comprise educational institutions such as institutes, faculties, and a campus environment that meets the daily needs of students. The physical environment and facilities of a modern university affect the quality of education (Uzunyol, 2019). In this regard, all the material and facilities offered by the university on campus have a considerable impact on the development of students and how they learn (McLaughlin & Faulkner, 2012). Attaining the perceptions of campus phenomenon constructed in the minds of students based on the facilities and services offered by

campuses is important for the self-assessment and self-development of universities. Especially in the process of distance education because of the COVID 19 pandemic, the opinions of students about the campus are also important to determine the impact of the pandemic on students' perception. In the study conducted for this purpose, the perceptions of university students about the phenomenon of campus were tried to be revealed through metaphors. At the end of the research, sixteen metaphorical categories were created from the data obtained. Students identified campus as "Involving diversities", "Provider", "Designing/manufacturing", "Source of experience", "Improver", "Socializing force", "Friendship", "Belonging", "Dynamic", "Source of life", "Source of different emotions", "Undesired", "Trust", "Valuable", "Full of nature" and "Having borders" via metaphors.

The perception of the campus was described by students as involving diversities (e.g., world, rainbow, arboretum) because "it involves people with diverse cultural backgrounds", or as a provider (e.g., home, a small town, fair) because "it provides whatever we need". Students considered campus as a designer/manufacturer and compared it to a factory, carpentry shop, sculptor workshop, etc., because "it measures, unites and shapes the individual who will benefit society in the future". The campus was described as improver (e.g., hospital, bus) because "it recovers us from illiteracy" or source of experience (life, a small city, home) because "we experience lots of things there". The undergraduates who participated in the research of Dalgiç, Karadeniz, and Onat (2012) generated similar metaphors as life, world, country, home, ocean, and city regarding the concept of the university. In addition, family, garden, factory, town, library, world, and meal metaphors were created for the university concept in the research of Fırat and Yurdakul (2012) in a similar way to our research results.

The largest category of metaphors containing images to describe campus is involving diversities which is typical of a supportive campus defined by Kuh (2011). Metaphors in this category (world, rainbow, arboretum, city, and flower garden, etc.) portrayed campus as a place of diversity supporting the findings of Dalgiç, Karadeniz, and Onat (2012) who emphasized the different backgrounds of the students. Some other university-oriented metaphor studies also reached categories as a commonplace for differences/similarities (Demirtaş & Çoban, 2014); as an area of multiculturalism and diversity (Oyman & Şentürk, 2015); as a place offering diversity (Ertem, 2015); as a place of cultural diversity (Korkmaz & Bağçeci, 2013). As stated by Lin (2010) college students are very aware of the diversity of the university since they come into contact with students from different ethnic/social/cultural backgrounds. And this supports the diversity of campus culture with the merging of different cultural values and different forms of activity, as well as different cultural forms on campus (Shen & Tian, 2012). The hallmark of today's campuses is diversity, which "refers to all the ways in which people differ, including key characteristics such as age, race, gender, ethnicity, mental and physical abilities, and sexual orientation" (Willaims, 2013). Diversity enriches the educational experience as it allows us to learn many different things from people whose experiences, beliefs, and perspectives are different from ours (American Council of Education Board of Directors, 2012). In this regard, the university provides students with not only professional knowledge but also the opportunity to see and interact with different cultures. The reason that the most emphasized feature of the campus by the students is its cosmopolitan structure is that the campuses accommodate students from many different cities and regions of the country with different cultures and lifestyles.

The next category of metaphors titled provider included the descriptions of campus as home, a small town, factory, fair, funfair, library, mall, nature, pool, and supermarket. Students alluded to the various opportunities and facilities of the campus, as in the research carried out by Tural (2011) where university students constructed metaphors for the ideal university as a social center. In the research, most of the students made the analogy of "city" concerning the ideal university as a social center where sports fields, dormitories, dining halls, cafeterias, game halls, music-theater-cinema-video clubs, and halls on campus provide students with physical, social and moral activities they need. The main reason why the campus is considered as a provider by the students is that the campus is not only an educational area but also a living community because the students are carrying out a large part of their vital activities within the campus area. In addition, the campuses allow students to do group

activities with their friends as well as individual activities. All these reasons make campuses the provider in the eyes of the student.

In the category of designing/manufacturing, the campus was compared to a factory, carpentry shop, sculptor workshop, sewing machine, vegetable garden, and workshop. In similar research, the plant category has emerged regarding the university concept. Students who consider the university as a plant used the metaphors “factory, garden, factory, workshop, cow, machine, field” for this purpose (Ertem, 2015; Oyman & Şentürk, 2015; Uğurlu, 2018). Students asserted that a university is a place where production is carried out and products are obtained. The productive identity of universities was also emphasized by the high school students who stated that the university should be an institution that supports the growth and development of the society (Şahin & Yıldız, 2006). From these facts, we can infer that universities are perceived as designing/manufacturing centers probably because innovations and products in many fields from technology to software, from health to informatics, from social sciences to literature, and art are carried out by scientists working for the universities.

In the category of a source of experience, the campus was portrayed as life, a small city, and home. This category has been found in Kısabacak-Başgürboğa and Açar’s (2019) study in which undergraduates emphasized the role of the university in enriching experiences. In a different study, university was conceptualized as a place of personal development, maturation, information flow, and learning (Dalgıç, Karadeniz, & Onat, 2012). In addition, similarly, in the research of Oyman and Şentürk (2015), the university was conceptualized as a place of development and maturation where the participants emphasized that the university is an environment that develops, matures the individual and renews and updates the individual in terms of adapting to innovations in society. In the research of Lin (2010), students stated that university life develops them in terms of self-government, decision-making, self-control, and self-expression. University life is an experience of growth, change, and development for students (Hwang, 2000; Lin, 2009), and students have the opportunity to learn both theoretical pieces of knowledge and apply what they have learned at the university to their lives. In addition, a large majority of students leave their families and live in a different city for the first time and experience their economic, social, and individual responsibilities. In these respects, the students perceive campus as a source of experience and as stated by Kuh (2011) they learn new things and experience real-world applications there.

Metaphors in this category of improver compared campus to the science center, hospital, bus, informal trainer, and kitchen. Consistent with this finding, Demirtaş and Çoban (2014) found out that students perceived university as a place of change/development with metaphors such as time machine, journey, train, water, bus stop, bus. The participants in the study of Oyman and Şentürk (2015), conceptualized college as a tool to move them to a better future similarly, with the metaphors of the ladder, solar system, minibus, and tree.

Metaphors in the category of socializing force involved recreational facility, café, farm, palette, park, and social media. Undergraduates conceptualized campus as an environment in which different people meet and engage in social relations. Similarly, in the research of Dalgıç, Karadeniz, and Onat (2012), the university was seen as social learning and sharing place by the students and the metaphors of a place of socialization, place of education and socialization, world, life, a combination of culture, school of life, sharing place, and country were produced. In the research of Ertem (2015), the theme of socialization and a place to have fun emerged from the metaphors produced by high school students about the concept of the university. Students who produced metaphors in this category consider university as a place where they have fun and make friends. Similarly, in the research of Kısabacak-Başgürboğa and Açar (2019), the socializing role of the university was emphasized, and social clubs and courses on campus were considered as an opportunity to create and participate in a social environment for students. The undergraduates who participated in the study of Lin (2010) emphasized the importance of having close friends on campus who would understand and support them, and acknowledged that close friendship is very important for university life. When these students encounter obstacles and difficulties, they tend to seek help and receive support from their close friends (e.g. roommates, classmates, and romantic partners) for emotional relaxation or problem-

solving. The opportunity for students from different social backgrounds to meet their peers not only in classrooms but also in social spaces; different types of activities provided for free or at low prices on campus allow students to socialize in a different and much wider environment than in the city (Yaylalı-Yıldız, 2020). In particular, extracurricular and free-time activities in these areas reveal the socializing power of the campus.

When the metaphors produced by the students regarding the concept of campus are examined according to the study year; there was no prominent difference in conceptualizations of campus between the two groups as regards campus as “Involving diversities”, “Provider”, “Designing/manufacturing”, “Source of experience”, “Improver”, “Socializing force”, “Friendship”, “Belonging”, “Source of life”, “Source of different emotions”. On the other hand, Freshmen/Sophomores perceived campus as full of nature but having borders, Juniors/Seniors considered campus as dynamic, valuable but undesired. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Freshmen/Sophomores who have little or no experience of campus life have made more optimistic and superficial assessments of the campus with the feeling of being a university student, these students have been interested in the natural dimension of the campus or the visible features of the campus as an area with borders away from the city. However, it is seen that the conceptualization of Juniors/Seniors is more realistic because they have experienced campus life. Some students in this group emphasized the constantly active/active structure of the campus, and some students considered the campus valuable considering their achievements in university life. Students in the Undesired category may have evaluated campus life more negatively for prospective problems such as having a profession, finding a job, and succeeding in central exams such as public officers’ recruitment exams rather than being a university student.

When the metaphors produced by the students regarding the concept of campus are examined according to the gender; there was no difference in conceptualizations of campus between the two groups as regards campus as “Involving diversities”, “Provider”, “Designing/manufacturing”, “Source of experience”, “Improver”, “Friendship”, “Source of life”, “Source of different emotions”, “Undesired”. Nevertheless, differences in terms of gender, were marked concerning campus as “Socializing force”, “Belonging”, “Dynamic”, “Trust”, “Valuable”, “Full of nature”, and “Having borders”. Female students perceived campus as a “Socializing force”, “Dynamic”, “Trust”, “Valuable”, and “Full of nature” whereas a male student considered it as “Having borders” like a country. In the research of Dalgıç, Karadeniz, and Onat (2012), it was found that the opinions of university students about the concept of “university” did not differ according to the gender variable. In the research of Demirtaş and Çoban (2014), the dominant metaphor about the university by male students was the house, and the most repeated metaphor by female students was the city. According to the authors, male students perceived the university as a living space, while female students compared the university more to a small settlement where different people and different cultures come together. In this study, female students idealize campus as a place of socializing and belonging, which are significantly associated with each other (Başaran & Demir, 2017) and as stated by Rainey et al. (2018), various academic and environmental involvements on campus can improve women’s sense of belonging. In addition, the vast majority of university students who participated in the research of Müezzın and Kaya (2018) stated that they felt like they belonged to the university, and they stated that peers and academics were effective in forming these feelings as asserted by Renn and Patton (2011) encouragement in active participation help students develop friendship and sense of belonging.

CONCLUSION

An analysis was performed using metaphors to determine how the campus is perceived by undergraduates and it was found that almost all the metaphors produced were positive and did not change during the distance education process, and the students’ perceptions of the campus were similar to the results of previous studies. Previous studies in the literature significantly focused on the university perceptions of the students. However, since the current study's findings are similar to those of previous studies, the findings were incorporated into the discussion. From this point of view, we figured out that the perceptions of students on university and campus are similar, cannot be

distinguished remarkably, and two terms are used interchangeably, although the term “campus” is broader in scope. According to the findings of the study, students, regardless of study year or gender, stressed the supportive aspect of the campus phenomenon, which is very surprising for us because we expected that the COVID-19 pandemic would bring students’ craving for the campus, ambiguity, and curiosity to the fore, especially at the grade level. However, no findings in this direction were discovered during the investigation. The most likely reason for this is that the specified campus does not provide students with appealing options despite its supportive climate, and the students are content with the benefits of distance education (transportation, accommodation, food and beverage costs, etc.). If future research is conducted on a different campus, it is expected to yield different results.

Recommendations

The largest category of metaphors contains images for the campus as involving diversities. A campus is usually perceived as a place where people from different backgrounds, cultures, and geographies live. This “diversity”, which students care about and are aware of so much, should not only be in extracurricular environments; this diversity should also be used in educational environments.

Educational activities on campuses such as scientific research, project making should be developed and the experiences of students on campus should be enriched by developing the role of designing/manufacturing and source of experience of campuses.

The socializing dimension of campuses should be strengthened, and university administrations should make the necessary investments for this. In addition, science clubs should be encouraged where this social aspect of the campus can serve educational purposes.

During the Covid-19 process, various social events should be organized to improve the feelings of social cohesion and belonging of students who have received their university education through distance education and have never come to campus in university life.

This research was conducted on students of a university located in the Central Anatolia Region. To examine the perceptions about the concept of “campus” from the point of view of university students from a metaphorical point of view, more and more extensive research needs to be done on different university students.

In this study, students’ perception of the campus was tried to be revealed only through metaphors. In addition, attaining the students’ perception of the campus through in-depth interviews will be more effective in terms of meeting the perceptions and expectations about the campus.

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