

# Fair play perception of sports sciences students: Kazakhstan-Turkey comparison

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## ABSTRACT

The unifying power of sport not only brings different cultures and people together but can also transcend social, economic and political differences between people. The unifying power and health benefits of sport among people around the world are indisputable. However, it is important to provide the right sports education from an early age in order to use and manage sports properly and to prevent negative consequences. For this reason, this study aims to reveal the fair play perception of Kazakh and Turkish athlete students who grew up in different cultures and prefer sports sciences in their university education. A total of 56 student-athletes studying sports sciences participated in the study. Case study design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the study. The data of the study were obtained by applying a personal information form to the athletes and asking them to complete the sentence "Fair play is like .../similar; because...". The data collection tool was applied by the researchers. The metaphors produced by the athletes were categorized as friendship, justice, respect for Kazakh students and honesty, respect, faith, and character for Turkish students. It is thought that the values, norms and expectations in which athletes from different countries are raised shape the perception of fair play.

**Keywords:** Fair play, sport, metaphor, perception, phenomenology.

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of sport has an important place in the lives of millions of people around the world. The unifying power in sports can not only bring different cultures and people together but can also overcome social, economic and political differences between people. This unifying power of sport can cause people to work in a common effort by sharing a common purpose and goal and to feel a sense of commitment to each other. Sports can also help people develop skills such as competing, learning, leading, collaborating and being disciplined. These skills are important for success not only in sports but also in other areas of life. However, abuse of sports is also possible. In particular, the commercialization of sport, doping, fierce competition, racism and other problems can counteract the positive effects of sports. Therefore, it is important to use and manage sports correctly. The unifying power and health benefits of sports among people around the world are indisputable. However, it is important to give the right sports education from a young age in order to use and

manage sports correctly and to prevent negative consequences.

The personality formation of children results from the interaction between family and school. The family plays an important role in children's learning of cultural, moral and traditional values. These values can be further developed within the scope of physical education and sports courses at school or in the context of games and sports. Students' interests, perspectives, and abilities can be shaped and developed through sports and game activities at school (Coakley, 2011). As Yapan (2007) states, the games offered by the teachers at the right time can be effective in the social and environmental development of children as well as their physical development. Coaches and parents can create environments where prosocial behaviors are encouraged and reinforced (Ellis et al., 2004). The concept of fair play helps students embrace values such as honesty, fair treatment and respect for other people in sports and other areas of life. Learning this concept plays

an important role in the development process of children and contributes to the formation of a peaceful environment in society. Fair play, a globally understood concept that finds its origins in sports, is not only a fundamental element of sports but also a more general philosophy of respect for others and respect for rules, whether in the field of sports or society (Renon, 2009). Fair play should not only be considered in a sportive dimension but also as a universal principle that can be applied to various contexts in which young people participate in regular sports (Ludwiczak and Bronikowska, 2022) as well as in daily life (Amoroso et al., 2023).

The Declaration of Sport, Tolerance and Fair Play agrees that sport as a form of social activity is an important field of education (Ludwiczak and Bronikowska, 2022; Sekot, 2011). When students are encouraged to focus on self-referential development, they are more likely to make positive judgments and develop an evolving mindset (Cheung et al., 2001; Morgan, 2019). However, most young people perceive fair play only in the field of sports (Bronikowska et al., 2019; Ludwiczak and Bronikowska, 2022; Sekot, 2011). However, the experiences of children in a sports environment with behaviors developed in a manner befitting the spirit of fair play may provide young people with a better opportunity to support the spread of these behaviors and encourage other individuals, as well as obtaining benefits from social connections. Metaphors can be used to determine the fair play perceptions acquired by the athlete students who grew up in various sports environments and who want to study in sports-related departments in their university preferences, through the sports activities they have experienced over the years.

By making their intuitive knowledge about the concept of fair play clearer, metaphors can serve as a framework that moves researchers further in terms of seeing themselves from a different perspective and understanding their needs. Metaphors constitute not only the elements of speech but also a basic mechanism of the mind that allows the elaboration of previous experiences (Zhao et al., 2010) as well as filtering and making sense of new experiences (Blau and Eshet-Alkalai, 2017). Therefore, this study aims to determine the perceptions of university students from two different cultures, who receive sports education from an early age in Kazakhstan and Turkey and continue their education in sports sciences as a choice, towards the concept of fair play through metaphors.

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

In the study, phenomenology, which is one of the qualitative research designs, was used to determine the perceptions of the athlete students studying in the faculties of sports sciences in Kazakhstan and Türkiye towards the

concept of fair play. Phenomenology is a scientific approach-based process that aims to determine the perspectives of individuals about their experiences and to reveal the facts/phenomena that they have constructed through their experiences (Creswell, 2009). The main purpose of this design is to reveal the experiences and descriptions of individuals regarding the related phenomenon (Demir, 2014).

### **Research group**

It consists of 26 athlete students studying at Kazakhstan Sports Academy and 30 athlete students studying at the Faculty of Sport Sciences, Gazi University. Participants consist of 25 female and 31 male athlete students. It was determined by the purposive sampling method in order to obtain in-depth information about the concept of fair play by the participants (Creswell and Poth, 2016). The participants were informed about the study and signed a voluntary consent form. It was determined by the purposive sampling method in order to obtain more in-depth information about the concept of fair play by the participants (Creswell and Poth, 2016). A detailed explanation was given to Turkish and Kazakh athletes about the study. In terms of study ethics, the athletes were given codes and their information was kept confidential (Yıldırım and Şimsek, 2021).

### **Category creation phase**

At this phase, categories were created by carefully examining the metaphors created by the athletes. Considering the explanations of the metaphors created by the researchers and athletes, 4 categories were created for Turkish athlete students and 3 categories for Kazakh athlete students, in which the metaphors produced were best represented.

### **Validity and reliability ensuring phase**

In order to ensure the validity of the study, (a) the athletes were informed about the study and a voluntary consent form was signed, (b) statements that would direct the opinions of the athletes in the data collection form were avoided (c) examples of the metaphors developed by the athletes were included in the study content (d) the information obtained was tried to be explained in detail and in the most understandable way (Creswell and Poth, 2016; Lincoln and Guba, 1986). In order to ensure reliability, the metaphors of Kazakh and Turkish sports students created by the authors and the categories representing the metaphors were reanalyzed by the author by taking the opinion of an instructor, who had qualitative research experience, and the reliability was calculated by

comparing the matching of the authors. In addition, the numbers of consensus and disagreement were determined and the inter-coder reliability was calculated using Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula [agreement/consensus + disagreement × 100]. The intercoder reliability coefficient was found to be 91%. Reliability is considered to be provided in cases where the agreement obtained in this formula is 90% or more.

### Data interpretation phase

Categories of metaphors and created metaphors are presented using tables. In this process, quotations from

the metaphors produced by the athletes were interpreted. While citations were given, code names were given to the athlete students.

## RESULTS

As a result of the analysis, the metaphors created by the athletes from two different nationalities were transformed into tables with similar characteristics. A few examples of metaphors are also included. Metaphors made by Kazakh athlete students participating in the research for the concept of "fair play" are given in Table 1, and metaphors created by Turkish athlete students are given in Table 2.

**Table 1.** The distribution of the metaphors produced by Kazakh athlete students regarding the concept of fair play according to the characteristics attributed to the source and the categories.

Conceptual themes	Codes
Fellowship	Friendship, love, peace, brotherhood, child-hearted people, sharing happiness, equality
Justice	Leaf of the tree, mutual interest, human, being a lawyer, dancing, the answer to the athlete, the law of sports
Respect	Respect shown to the opposing team, gentlemanly, respect, conscience

When the metaphors created by Kazakh athletes were examined, it was seen that they were gathered under the

themes of fellowship 11 people (42%), justice 9 people (34%), and respect 6 people (23%).

**Table 2.** The distribution of the metaphors produced by Turkish athlete-students regarding the concept of fair play according to the characteristics attributed to the source and the categories.

Conceptual themes	Codes
Fairness	Clear water, not teaching lies, quality sportsman, morality, mirror, character, life, brotherhood
Respect	Respect for referees and opponents, manner of behavior, respect to the opponent, manner of behavior, stance
Faith	Argument, harvest, my conscience, sea, win in the match, history
Character	Humanity, keeping it ahead of selfishness, exemplary character, ego ambition, mirror

When the metaphors created by Turkish athletes were examined, it was seen that they were gathered under the themes of fairness 10 people (33%), respect 9 people (30%), faith 6 people (20%), character 5 people (16%).

such as respect for the opposing team, gentlemanliness, respect, conscience, and Turkish students with respect to referees and opponents, manner of behavior, respect to the opponent, manner of behavior, and stance.

### The theme of being an element of respect

When the findings are examined, the concept of fair play unites both groups only in the theme of respect. On the basis of the concept of fair play, the existence of respect shown for human dignity is primarily emphasized (Pehlivan, 2004). Fair play also requires athletes and players to be respectful toward referees, coaches, fans, and others. In the explanations of the metaphors created by the athlete students for the concept of fair play in both societies, Kazakh students explained the characteristics of the metaphor attributed to the source, with expressions

*"Fair play is/similar to respecting the opponent before himself because health and respect are the most important in sports." (Turkish athlete student 29)*  
*"Fair play is like/similar to respect because the rule and basis of fair play is respect." (Kazakh athlete student 16)*

When the expressions of 29 Turkish and 16 Kazakh participants are examined, they compare fair play to respect. They reinforce this statement by stating that the greatest rule of being a good person, is the basis of sports, and the most important element of health and respect. The

metaphors created by Kazakh athletes are the themes of fellowship, justice and respect.

### Fair play as an element of fellowship

*“Fair play is like/similar to fellowship because there is competition and conflict between brothers as in sports, but brothers know that they are a part of the family and that without one, the others will be incomplete. They support each other. Likewise, in sports, the athletes being virtuous and respecting each other is like this.” (Kazakh athlete student 11)*  
*“Fair play is like a brotherhood because the athlete is the brother of the athlete. Competitors must also behave in a brotherly manner, with respect to each other. This is the purpose of fair play. The game or the competition ends, but the brotherhood remains.” (Kazakh athlete student 6)*

When the theme of fellowship is examined, in this category, Kazakh athletes explained the characteristics of the metaphor attributed to the source with expressions such as friendship, love, peace, brotherhood, child-hearted people, sharing happiness, and equality in the explanations of the metaphors they created for the concept of fair play.

### Fair play as an element of justice

*“Fair play is like/similar to not defraud because in sports competitions and games, everyone should get what they deserve fairly. No one's right should be beaten, the good one should win.” (Kazakh athlete student 22)*  
*“Fairplay is like/similar to the leaf of the tree is part of the sport, because in sports you cannot achieve good results if you are not fair and do not show justice. Sports and fair play are whole.” (Cossack athlete student 26)*

When the theme of justice is examined, in this category, Kazakh athletes explained the characteristics of the metaphor attributed to the source with expressions such as the leaf of the tree, mutual interest, human, being a lawyer, dancing, the answer to the athlete, the law of sports, in the explanations of the metaphors created by the students for the concept of fair play.

The metaphors created by Turkish athlete students are gathered under the themes of fairness, respect, faith and character.

### Fair play as an element of fairness

When the theme of honesty was examined, Turkish athlete students explained the characteristics of the metaphor attributed to the source with expressions such as clear water, not teaching lies, quality sportsman, morality, mirror, character, life, and brotherhood in the explanations of the metaphors they created for the concept of fair play.

*“Fair play is like/similar to clear water because athletes with the concept of fair play are clean and pure.” (Turkish athlete student 23)*  
*“Fair play is like/similar to life because being right always makes you proud.” (Turkish athlete student 11)*

### Fair play as an element of faith

Examining the theme of faith, Turkish athlete students explained the characteristics of the metaphor attributed to the source with expressions such as argument, harvest, my conscience, sea, and win in the match in the explanations of the metaphors they created for the concept of fair play.

*“Fair play is like/similar to everything to win because if I don't do it, the opponent will.” (Turkish athlete student 30)*  
*“Fair play is like/similar to the borderline because crossing it makes you question your moral beliefs, while not crossing it when necessary will cause you great losses.” (Turkish athlete student 1)*

### Fair play as an element of character

In our last theme, being an element of character, Turkish athlete students explained the concept of fair play with expressions such as humanity, keeping it ahead of selfishness, exemplary character, ego ambition, mirror, and history.

*“Fair play is/similar to being an exemplary athlete because this is very important to be an exemplary athlete and should be in every athlete I play against.” (Turkish sports student 25)*

*“Fair play is like a mirror/similar because our behavior on the pitch reflects our character.” (Turkish athlete student 17)*

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In our study, in which we examined the fair play perception of Kazakh and Turkish athlete students, we see that concept perception can change depending on their personal beliefs and ethical values, as well as their cultural backgrounds. Nations and communities of Turkish origin, which have a wide place in history, are in front of the societies that spread over the widest area in the world. Kazakhstan and Turkey, which have similar cultural characteristics, have very deep and rooted sports cultures. Every nation has a sports culture that originates from its life and social structure and sometimes affects its geographical features (Türkmen et al., 2006). Cultural differences can affect perceptions of the concept of fair play. The values, norms and expectations in which the athletes in different countries are raised can shape the perception of fair play. These differences can also be caused by cultural, social and educational factors. In our study to determine how the two nations with a deep-rooted history of sports perceive the concept of fair play and how they have adopted it in their cultures, it was seen that the metaphors that Kazakh athlete students created for the concept of fair play were gathered under the themes of fellowship, justice, respect, and Turkish athlete students were gathered in the themes of fairness, respect, faith and character.

When the created metaphor is examined, the concept of fair play is united in the theme of being an element of respect for the athletes of both nationalities. Respect is a central component of fair play because athletes are expected to show respect for each other and their opponents, and to behave fairly and ethically in the game. It is part of fair play that the athletes be respectful, respect their opponents, respect the rules of the game, and respect the referee's decisions. Respect makes sports more enjoyable, fairer and more ethical. When the metaphors created are examined, their analogy with concepts such as respect to the opponent, the referee, stance, and conscience show that the concept of fair play is integrated with the element of respect in both cultures. It is important for the athletes to respect each other and the game, to keep the fair play values alive and to preserve the beauty of the sport.

While the concepts created by the Kazakh athlete students are gathered under the theme of being an element of justice, we see that the themes created by the Turkish athlete students are gathered under the theme of being an element of fairness. In the metaphors gathered under the element of justice, it has been seen that Kazakh athletes emphasize the need for everyone to compete

under equal conditions. On the other hand, we see that the kind of athlete students emphasize the need for individuals to meet on the line of equality by displaying fair play in the game, just like the unwritten rules of fair play. With this study, the concepts that emerged by the athlete students of both nationalities are supported by many studies on fair play in the literature (Miller et al., 2003; Ommundsen et al., 2003; Spander et al., 2014).

As athletes accelerate on the career ladder, they may have to contend with various difficulties. In studies on the psychological difficulties experienced in this process, it has been emphasized that metaphors can be used to cope with the problems that arise as a result of the changing conditions during the sports career process (Triggs et al., 2011). While the metaphors created by Turkish athlete students on the themes of faith and character are predicted to the necessity of winning in sports, it is seen that fair play focuses on the themes of fellowship and brotherhood for Kazakh athletes. It can be said that Turkish athlete-students have difficulty in complying with the rules of fair play or they do not adhere to the moral principles due to factors such as the pressure to win in performance sports, a high financial gain or financial losses in the meanings attributed to the concept of fair play. We see that fair play and moral behaviors are replaced by the saying "Winning is nothing, it is the only thing" in performance sports athletes (Hardaway, 2003).

Metaphors help us understand the thoughts and feelings of people by making the concepts they use in their daily lives more understandable (Saban, 2010). From this point of view, it is thought that this study contributes to revealing how athletes and students from different cultures in the field of sports internalize a sport-related concept such as fair play and what kind of meanings they attribute to this concept. Takada et al. (2000) evaluate that each metaphor used is a product of socio-cultural accumulation and argue that it is necessary to examine the social and cultural backgrounds of individuals in order to understand why they prefer the metaphors.

Thoughts are one of the most important tools in triggering emotions. Concepts that makeup thoughts can be shaped by the meaning attributed to them. Athletes from both nations find the concept of fair play against them in all conditions and situations related to sports. The concepts they can produce when they see and hear these expressions are important in terms of revealing the sports culture of those countries. It can achieve results by taking into account the cultural differences and sports education systems of Kazakhstan and Turkey. Cultural values and the education system can shape the fair play perception of the athletes and lead to differences. It will be able to identify the similarities and differences in fair play perceptions between sports science students in Kazakhstan and Turkey. It is recommended that fair play be better understood and developed by increasing such research and providing information in the field of international sports education and ethics.

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