

Evaluation of Perceptions on Acceptance and Avoidance with Metaphor Analysis

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Introduction: In this study, it was tried to understand how the concept of acceptance, which is one of the basic elements of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and experiential avoidance, which can be defined as the efforts of individuals to avoid and get rid of difficult feelings and thoughts in relation to this concept, manifests itself metaphorically.

Method: In this study, phenomenology model, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. Phenomenology can enable the uncovering of phenomena that are recognized but thought to lack in-depth understanding (Patton, 2022). Data were collected from 230 people in total and 174 responses were deemed appropriate for the study and were evaluated. In order to determine the participants' metaphorical perceptions of difficult emotions and thoughts, a semi-structured form with the statement "Painful past experiences, disturbing emotions and thoughts are like, what should be done in these difficult moments is" was used. The first blank here provides information about the concept of "acceptance" and the second blank provides information about the concept of "experiential avoidance". The data were analyzed using coding method through content analysis. In this context, the coded metaphors were divided into themes and reported.

Results: According to the findings obtained in our research, the answers given by the participants about painful experiences, negative emotions and thoughts were grouped under 6 different categories, and the metaphors about what to do in the face of negative emotions and thoughts were also grouped under 6 different categories. The findings are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 the categories of physical pain/painful stimulus (36%), emotional pain/painful stimulus (21%) and resembling physical formations (16%) are prominent. It is seen that the categories of experiential avoidance (46.47%) and tolerance (14.11%) are prominent.

Discussion: In this context, it may be important to determine the factors affecting the differentiation of definitions of pain and to test whether this affects therapeutic interventions in the clinical field. In the results related to behavior, the categories of experiential avoidance (46.47%) and tolerance (14.11%) are prominent. In conclusion, in the participants' perceptions of painful experiences and emotions and thoughts, it was observed that metaphorical discourses towards acceptance were less common and metaphorical discourses towards experiential avoidance were predominant. Therefore, it will be especially important for ACT therapists to assess their clients' perceptions of acceptance in their sessions.

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