

# Humor Use in School Settings: The Perceptions of Teachers

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## Abstract

This study investigated teachers' use of humor in school settings. Eleven lower secondary school teachers from different branches volunteered in this qualitative study. I collected data through individual, face-to-face interviews and used content and descriptive analysis methods for data analysis. In conclusion, the participants mostly said that they generally used positive humor types for useful goals in school settings. The results regarding the participants' goals of humor usage indicated that using positive humor types in the styles of affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor can be useful for managerial and pedagogical efficiency in schools. As for the results of the metaphorical analysis, participants mainly use positive humor and, to some extent, situational humor. Affiliative humor style was the most preferred one. The results also implied that some participants use self-enhancing humor style and aggressive humor style as well. Overall, this research offers a more complete and detailed understanding of teachers' use of humor in school settings and can be used to guide teachers and school administrators who want to use humor effectively in both managerial and educational contexts.

## Keywords

teacher, use of humor, managerial humor, pedagogical humor, school

## Introduction

Humor can be incorporated into schools in a variety of ways, including administrative processes (Lyttle, 2007; D. M. Martin et al., 2004) and instruction (Banas et al., 2011; Wanzer et al., 2010). Over the years, research on humor use in schools has focused on either the instructional humor (Bieg & Dresel, 2018; Bieg et al., 2019; Bolkan et al., 2018; Chabeli, 2008; Deiter, 2000; Lei et al., 2010; Özdoğru & McMorris, 2013; Wanzer, 2002; Weaver & Cotrell, 1987; Ziv, 1988) or a series of organizational factors (Altinkurt & Yılmaz, 2016; Avolio et al., 1999; Balta, 2016; Blanchard et al., 2014; Cann et al., 1999; Cann & Etzel, 2008; Consalvo, 1989; Crowe et al., 2019; Evans & Steptoe-Warren, 2018; Fluegge-Woolf, 2014; Tümkaya, 2007). However, less study incorporated the both together into schools. This study tries to reveal the phenomenon of humor use in school settings in a holistic way. In this context, it focuses to draw conclusions from the opinions of teachers on humor use for both organizational and instructional efficiency.

## Conceptual Framework

**Humor.** Humor is a universal human phenomenon related to all aspects of human life (Lefcourt, 2001). Being able to enjoy humor and to express this satisfaction with laughter is

accepted as one of the necessities of being human (R. A. Martin, 2007). Laughing and smiling, which is an instinctive behavior, is a universal body language that shows a person's level of satisfaction (Altinkurt & Yılmaz, 2011). Humor comes to life through interaction and communication. Humorous interactions are a form of communication in which at least one side laughs (Consalvo, 1989). Romero and Cruthirds (2006) defined humor as an entertaining, ridiculous, or funny form of communication that creates positive emotions in people. Overall, humor is a broad concept that is perceived as funny by people and attributed to anything that makes people laugh (R. A. Martin, 2007).

**Theories of humor.** Like other human-specific phenomena, different perspectives have emerged parallel to the meaning attributed to humor and laughter in the historical process. This situation has led to the emergence of different humor theories (Şahin, 2018). Basically, we can talk about three main theories: superiority theory, incongruity theory, and

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arousal theory (Banas et al., 2011; Morreall, 1983; Raskin, 1985).

Superiority theory states that humor stems from the fact that people feel superior to other people in many ways (De Koning & Weiss, 2002). Feelings such as humiliation, malice, grudge, hostility, ridicule, or superiority characterize the sense of humor in the theory of superiority (Carrell, 2008). In this theory, aggressiveness seems to be the root of a great deal of humor (Banas et al., 2011).

In incongruity theory, laughter occurs when people encounter an incompatible situation or result that they do not expect (Usta, 2009). According to this theory, there is an expectation about how humor will end in individuals. However, people are stunned when events turn out to be unexpected. Situations contrary to expectations cause laughter (Özünlü, 1999). That is, the root of this theory is based on laughing at the fun things that occur in unexpected, complex, illogical, and inappropriate situations (Duncan et al., 1990).

The arousal theory has a physiological perspective that treats laughter as the emergence of neural energy. Laughter is accepted as the sudden discharge of neural energy accumulated by pressure in this theory. It focuses on stress relief and relaxation with laughter (as cited in Şahin, 2018). The coping mechanism of humor is based on the tension-relief functions of arousal theory (Banas et al., 2011).

Superiority, incongruity, and arousal theories account for the main aspects of humor. However, they do not clarify the relationship between learning and instructional humor (Banas et al., 2011; Wanzer et al., 2010). In this context, Wanzer et al. (2010) suggested Instructional Humor Processing Theory (IHPT) as the explanation of why certain kinds of teachers' humor result in improved learning in classroom and others do not. According to IHPT, humor related to instructional content is positively associated with student learning. However, disparaging and offensive humor as the forms of inappropriate humor is not correlated with student learning (Wanzer et al., 2010). According to this theory, students must first recognize and solve the incongruity in a teacher's message so that it is perceived as humorous. If the students recognize the incongruity, they must then interpret it. If they do not resolve the incongruity, the message in humor will likely distract and confuse them (Goodboy et al., 2015).

**Humor styles.** R. A. Martin et al. (2003) proposed a four-dimension model of humor use to understand humor's dynamic nature. Their delineation of humor styles includes potentially two healthy (self-enhancing humor and affiliative humor) and two unhealthy (aggressive humor and self-depreciating humor) humor styles.

People who use self-enhancing humor have a humorous perspective on life (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Self-enhancing humor is attributed to the tendency of individuals to enjoy the incongruities of life while maintaining their humorous outlook on life, even in stressful times. Because this style of humor can contribute to the health of individuals

by playing the role of a coping and emotion regulation mechanism, it is assumed as a healthy humor style. In self-enhancing humor, the individual tries to resist the destructive emotions caused by negative situations by taking a humorous attitude. It is positively associated with positive emotions such as optimism, self-esteem, cheerfulness, well-being, and self-confidence and negatively associated with negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, stress, and bad mood (Cann & Etzel, 2008; R. A. Martin, 2007; R. A. Martin et al., 2003).

People who use affiliative humor joke with the others to enhance social interaction (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Affiliative humor is a tendency to say funny things, tell jokes, make spontaneous and humorous witty banter to improve relationships, reduce interpersonal tensions, and cheer others up (R. A. Martin, 2007). Funny stories, inside jokes, and good-natured practical jokes during social events are some of the examples of affiliative humor (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006).

In contrast to affiliative humor, aggressive humor is the use of potentially offensive forms of humor. The person who uses aggressive humor has a tendency to criticize, victimize, belittle, or manipulate others. Sarcasm, ridicule, teasing, derision, and disparagement humor are such types of humor essentially used in aggressive humor (R. A. Martin, 2007; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006; Zillman, 1983). Therefore, it is a potentially unhealthy style of humor (R. A. Martin et al., 2003).

Self-depreciating humor is the other potentially unhealthy style of humor. The people who use self-depreciating humor ridicule and disparage themselves in an attempt to amuse others. Thus, they seek to gain approval from others. They laugh along with others when they are ridiculed or disparaged (R. A. Martin, 2007; R. A. Martin et al., 2003). It is negatively related to psychological well-being and self-esteem (R. A. Martin et al., 2003). On the contrary, individuals who use a moderate amount of self-depreciating humor desire to be more approachable by reducing their status in organizations (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Similarly, a leader can create a positive feeling within the organization by using self-depreciating humor. Besides, using this humor make them more approachable and can enhance social relations within the leader and employees (Kushner, 1990, as cited in Matthias, 2014). Furthermore, in their previous research, Heintz and Ruch (2018) emphasized that self-depreciating humor might also improve the psychological well-being of people who have lower self-esteem or are prone to negative effects and might serve a self-enhancing or coping function in dealing with weaknesses, mistakes, and problems. However, excessive use of this humor is potentially detrimental to well-being (R. A. Martin et al., 2003).

**Functions of humor in school settings.** The functions of humor in school settings can be handled in two main domains: instruction and administrative processes. Here, humor is first

presented as a pedagogical tool in classroom and then reviewed as a managerial tool in administrative processes in schools.

Teaching and learning are complex endeavors. A large number of studies exist to understand which variables influence learning and instruction in the classroom. One such variable is concept-related humor that seems to have positive effects on instructional quality and student learning in the classroom (Bolkan et al., 2018; Deiter, 2000; Field, 2009). Considering the corpus of literature, results linking teachers' use of humor and student learning have been clear (Balta, 2016; Bell & Pomerantz, 2016; Bolkan et al., 2018; Chabeli, 2008; Krause, 2015; Wanzer et al., 2010).

Wanzer et al. (2010) examined why certain types of humor produced by teacher increases student learning and others do not. They found that, consistent with IHPT, content-related humor, an appropriate form of instructional humor, was positively associated with student learning. However, offensive and disparaging humor, which are inappropriate forms of humor, did not correlate with student learning. Another study identified that the humor produced by the instructor was a positive predictor of students' extra effort, cognitive learning, participation, and out-of-class communication (Goodboy et al., 2015). Cooper et al. (2018) investigated the perceptions of college students about instructor humor. Almost 99% of students said that they enjoyed instructor humor and reported that it improved the climate of the classroom and strengthened the relationship between the student and the instructor. Furthermore, Nienaber et al. (2019) found in their study that the students engaged with the instructor more, when the style of humor of the instructor was good-natured. On the contrary, it was the lowest when it was sarcastic and aggressive. Notably, Bieg et al. (2019) reported in their study that only course-related humor was effective, and teachers should avoid aggressive humor. More recently, Embalzado and Sajampun (2020) identified that most of the Thai students prefer to have a certain degree of humor in the university classroom. In this sense, it is likely to assert that humor may be a useful pedagogical tool in classrooms.

Learning starts with interest and enthusiasm. People learn and remember the things that they are interested in better (Şahin, 2018). However, students' learning may be reduced, suppressed, or even not realized in those learning environments where negative emotions, such as fear, violence, threat, and sadness are dominant, and where a student's interest is not evoked (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al., 1999; Tamblyn, 2003). In this sense, it is important for teachers to create happy learning environments where students feel comfortable, safe, peaceful, and cheerful (Şahin, 2018; Tamblyn, 2003). One such tool may be the use of positive humor in classrooms.

Teachers' use of humor in the classroom affects learning in two ways. First, humor plays a remarkable role that directly stimulates and influences the student's memory and

mental capacity for learning. Thus, humor becomes an effective learning and memory aid tool for students. Humor develops students' understanding and comprehension. Thus, one can learn and remember the subject easier. Learning increases, and retention is maintained (Chabeli, 2008; Deiter, 2000; Jeder, 2015; Morrison, 2008; Summerfelt et al., 2010). Second, humor creates not only a student-motivating element of fun and laughter but also a more relaxed and positive classroom environment that facilitates learning (Banas et al., 2011; Krause, 2015). Thus, the teacher who creates positive and targeted humor in an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning will contribute to the development of the student's self-confidence and make students more willing to learn (Chabeli, 2008). Learning tasks will become more enjoyable for the students (Morrison, 2008).

More specifically, the use of humor in the classroom helps to create a more positive and productive learning environment by eliminating the communication and learning barriers between teachers and students (Chabeli, 2008; Deiter, 2000; Morrison, 2008). Humor brings teachers and students closer. It reduces social distance and strengthens positive communication. In-class anxiety decreases and the morale of students increases. Furthermore, it increases the students' interest and attention toward learning. In this way, humor increases the students' active participation by attracting them into the learning process (Chabeli, 2008; Deiter, 2000; Jeder, 2015; Morrison, 2008; Seidman & Brown, 2016; Summerfelt et al., 2010). With humor, learning becomes a collaborative initiative between teachers and students. However, the important thing in this process is the use of humor that is related to the content of the course. Otherwise, humor will not produce the desired educational results. It will only provide fun for students and teachers (Chabeli, 2008; Jeder, 2015; Krause, 2015). To summarize, there are many advantages in using humor in the classroom, but teachers must first understand why and how humor functions as an educational tool (Deiter, 2000; Wanzer, 2002). If one can use humor effectively as an educational tool, humor may contribute to what is taught in the classroom (Banas et al., 2011; Deiter, 2000).

Humor has been attributed to improved morale, productivity, motivation, creativity, and a more positive culture in an organization (Hoffman, 2007). Positive humor reduces anxiety (Cann et al., 1999; Romero & Pescosolido, 2008), distress (Blanchard et al., 2014; Cann et al., 2014), and tension (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). It enhances employee motivation (Lyttle, 2007; Şahin, 2016), strengthens team unification (Lyttle, 2007; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012), and increases creativity (Fluegge-Woolf, 2014; J. Holmes, 2007) and organizational commitment (Francis, 1994; Greatbatch & Clark, 2002; Yarwood, 1995). Therefore, humor may be a useful managerial tool in schools as well. Given that humor can be used as a useful tool in both administrative and educational settings in schools (Şahin, 2018), the use of desired humor by

teachers can play an important role in facilitating positive outcomes in schools. However, there are still no clear conclusions about how humor functions in the school (as cited in Bolkan et al., 2018).

Humor at work plays an important role in promoting and strengthening interpersonal relations and creating a positive workplace atmosphere (Decker & Rotondo, 2001). The use of humor in organizations helps to increase morale, productivity, motivation and creativity, as well as build a more positive organizational culture (Hoffman, 2007). Humor plays as a lubricant in communication, builds a sense of intimacy, and thus dominates positive communication. It creates a positive atmosphere at work where employees feel positive. It plays an important role in evoking creative thought. Thus, it leads to improving workplace innovation (Güler & Güler, 2010; Lyttle, 2007; Meyer, 2000). Hurren (2006) suggested that humorous workplaces may increase teachers' job satisfaction. Humor affects well-being (Guenter et al., 2013; R. A. Martin et al., 2003) and improves employee mood (George & Jones, 2012). In this sense, humor can create an atmosphere where employees feel better (Avolio et al., 1999), and workplace humor can be a useful tool for building a positive organizational atmosphere.

Humor usually leads us to feel positive emotions; however, it does not always have positive outcomes on people (Lyttle, 2007; Meyer, 2000; Scheel et al., 2016). For example, as a negative and unhealthy humor style, aggressive humor decreases the efficiency of teamwork, organizational commitment (Romero & Arendt, 2011), employee satisfaction (Evans & Steptoe-Warren, 2018; Romero & Arendt, 2011), creativity (Evans & Steptoe-Warren, 2018), and trust (Lee, 2015) within organizations. Similarly, negative in-group humor has been found to isolate employees from each other within the organization, damage members' trust (Blanchard et al., 2014), reduce employee satisfaction (Blanchard et al., 2014; Cann et al., 2014), erode motivation, increase employee distress (Şahin, 2016), and cause frustration (Blanchard et al., 2014; Şahin, 2016). As the humor has positive and negative results in workplaces, teachers' use of humor may be decisive for managerial effectiveness.

*Metaphors in educational studies.* In educational studies, metaphors can be used as useful conceptual tools. One of the common reasons why metaphors is used in educational research is to illustrate and explain a concept in such a way that it can communicate effectively with the target audience (Midgley & Trimmer, 2013). Several studies (De Leon & Carillo, 2007; Inbar, 1996; Şahin, 2019; Toremén & Dos, 2009; Uslu, 2019; Yurtseven, 2017; Zibin, 2016) in educational literature have benefited from metaphors based on different theories of metaphor. This study utilized the cognitive theory of metaphor, of which foundations were laid down by Lakoff and Johnson (1980a).

According to the cognitive theory, metaphorical concepts, which are cognitively important, are necessary to understand

what is happening in our world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b). Metaphors structure our perception, thought, and action (Saban, 2006). As conceptual devices (Tepebaşılı, 2013), they have an impact on the way we behave and act and are an important tool that allows us to conceptualize reality (Trčková, 2014). In this context, the metaphorical concepts of teachers on humor use in the school settings may guide both teachers and principals to benefit from humor effectively. That is why the study focused on to determine the teachers' humor use in schools via metaphors. To clarify better, teachers were also asked to answer which humor types they use and for what purpose.

This study utilized the cognitive theory of metaphor, which is a common data tool used in qualitative researches in medicine, education, psychoanalysis, and business (Tepebaşılı, 2013). Because metaphors in this theory are not only as a matter of language but also as a matter of thought (Trčková, 2014). Metaphors arise from the interaction of language and thought, and transform thinking into language (Tepebaşılı, 2013). Metaphors are not just speech figures, but also constitute the necessary mechanisms that allow our brain to model and console our experiences. They help us to describe the world by helping us frame and embody the meaning of our experiences (Zhao et al., 2010). Thus, they enable us to understand and make sense of one experience according to another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a). Metaphors specifically allow us to reveal the meanings we attribute to concepts subconsciously as a result of our knowledge and experiences (Şahin, 2019).

### *Purpose of the Study*

Workplace humor is an important and less studied subject as a managerial tool in organizations (Blanchard et al., 2014). Yet, there are still no clear conclusions about how humor functions in schools (as cited in Bolkan et al., 2018). Although considered useful by teachers (Bell & Pomerantz, 2016; Şahin, 2016; Wanzer, 2002), the use of humor as an in-class educational tool is either unthought or unconsciously used to have fun and to make students laugh (Şahin, 2018). To this end, this study focuses on teachers' humor use both in classes and out of classes in school settings and investigates the teachers' views of their own use of humor in school settings. In this sense, the study is important for creating consciousness and awareness among teachers who are still unaware of the fact that humor can be used as an effective tool, and for promoting the functional use of humor in school settings.

By identifying the teachers' humor types and aim of humor use together with their metaphorical perceptions, it is likely to understand the teachers' use of humor in both the school and classroom settings. Thus, the study can guide teachers and principals how to incorporate humor into the schools as a managerial and pedagogical tool. Based on this, the following research questions were addressed:

**Research Question 1:** What types of humor do teachers use in school settings?

**Research Question 2:** Why do teachers use humor in school settings?

**Research Question 3:** How do teachers express their humor use in school settings by metaphors?

## Method

### Research Design

This study utilizes one of the qualitative research methods, the phenomenology design, as the study aims to determine the perceptions of teachers about humor use in school settings. Phenomenology studies examine phenomena that we are aware of but do not have a detailed understanding (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013), and try to reveal the nature or meaning of our daily experiences with a deeper understanding (Patton, 2001). The purpose of phenomenology studies is to discover or define the meaning or essence of the experiences of the participants or the information at the level of consciousness (Hays & Singh, 2012). Therefore, in such studies, the common meaning of the experiences of more than one person regarding a concept or phenomenon tries to be explained (Creswell, 2016). The phenomenon of this study is the “humor use in school settings.”

In phenomenology studies, metaphors can be used effectively to reveal the cognitive approaches of individuals regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Şahin, 2019). In this study, based on which humor types teachers use and for what purpose, it was asked to metaphorize the humor use in schools. Thus, the use of humor in school settings has also been tried to be explained with the help of cognitive theory of metaphors.

### Participants

Eleven voluntary teachers working in seven different lower secondary schools in the central districts of the province of Antalya, Turkey, participated in this qualitative study. As the teachers were eager to participate and were easy to access, chain (snowball) sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used to determine the participants (Patton, 2001). Each participant suggested one or more candidate participants to the researcher and called the candidates on behalf of the researcher whether they want to participate in the study. Then, the researcher arranged an appointment for the interview with the volunteers and conducted the interviews. In addition, the researcher paid attention to the diversity in research participation, that is, gender, teaching branches, and total teaching service years. Five of the participants were female, and six were males. One has a master's degree, whereas the other 10 have a bachelor's degree. The study consisted of one participant from each of following teaching branches: Counseling, Science, Social Studies,

Turkish Literature, Maths, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Arts, Foreign Language, Music, Physical Education, and Religious Studies. For the entire group, the total teaching service years (TTSY) varies from 9 to 33 years ( $TTSY_M = 18.36$  years).

### Data Collection

Face-to-face individual interviews were used to collect the data in the school settings where the participants work. The voices during the interviews were recorded via the researcher's mobile phone. In interviews, the participants answered three open-ended questions: (a) What types of humor do you use in school? (b) Why do you use humor in school? and (c) What would you say if I asked you to describe your use of humor in school settings with a living or inanimate thing? Why?

In the first and second questions, the study tried to seek what types of humor are used by teachers in schools and for what purpose. Furthermore, the first two questions served as a mental thinking exercise for the last question. Thus, the participants became more prone to produce metaphors. After that, each participant was asked to produce only one metaphor about their use of humor in the third question.

In the process of metaphor production, the participants were asked to liken in-class or out-class humor use in the school setting to something concrete that comes to their mind first. This concrete thing produced by the participants was chosen as the metaphorical data. Then, they were requested to explain why they had chosen that metaphor. As conceptual devices, metaphors enabled to reveal the participants' opinions reflecting deep thought patterns, which could not be discovered with the first two questions of this study, because metaphors can enable people's hidden and unknown areas (see also Luft, 1969) to be discovered according to the cognitive theory of metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a; Tepebaşılı, 2013). Thus, the researcher was able to interpret the metaphors in depth and more easily, thanks to the first two questions, at the same time, empowered the answers to the first two questions with the deep thought patterns of metaphors had reflected. In fact, the answers to the first two questions and metaphor analysis mutually strengthened each other's impact.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through descriptive and inductive content analysis by using a qualitative data analysis software. First, the interview records were read several times. Thus, the researcher had a holistic understanding of the data. Then, a thematic framework regarding the conceptual structure of the research was prepared as a roadmap for the descriptive analysis process to associate literature with the research questions. After, the data were compiled logically according to this thematic framework. Fourth, the codes and accordingly, the

categories were derived via inductive content analysis to reveal the underlying concepts and the relationships among them. In fact, this process uncovered embedded categories. In addition, the findings were strengthened with direct descriptive quotations from the participants, which conspicuously reflect their views (Creswell, 2016; Lune & Berg, 2017). In the last question, the metaphors of the participants were metaphorically analyzed and categorized. In this process, the metaphorical analysis progressed to a more in-depth evaluation in which the follow-up questions were raised: What thoughts are associated with the metaphors? What aspects of “teachers’ humor use” were highlighted by metaphors? Later, the image fields containing the meanings evoked by each metaphor were produced to think multidimensional for shedding light on underlying thoughts (Tepebaşılı, 2013). In addition, to hide the identity of the participants, the codes were used such as T1, T2, and so on instead of the participants. Finally, frequencies and percentages were used to make the qualitative data more understandable.

### *Validity and Reliability*

In qualitative research, validity refers to the accuracy of the findings. Triangulation, member checking, and auditing are the rigorous approaches for the validity of qualitative studies (Creswell, 2016). As for increasing the validity, the interviews were audio-recorded to identify all opinions without any missing. In the data analysis process, a thematic framework, including criteria established to ensure consistency, was used. Thus, the consistency of the data analyses conducted in different sessions was assured. To confirm the accuracy of the findings, the last draft of the study was read by three participants to ensure that their opinions were accurately represented. This was a kind of member-checking task.

To increase the reliability of the research, the coding and categorization process was shared with a faculty in the field of education sciences. Two meetings were held. In the first meeting, the opinions and categories of the first two questions were discussed. The researcher and the faculty agreed on all opinions and categories produced for the first question (17 humor types). However, there existed a disagreement about three opinions and one category in question two (a total of 30 opinions and five categories). Until reaching a mutual agreement, the codes and categories were discussed. Finally, the researcher corrected those through our agreed decision. In the second meeting, the last question and then the whole questions were discussed overall. In the last question, there existed only one disagreement about the metaphor, fox. At first, there was a disagreement whether it referred to affiliative humor or aggressive humor. Then, the researcher and the faculty decided that both could be valid for that. Until reaching a mutual agreement, the codes and categories were discussed. At the end of two sessions, the faculty and the researcher reached a consensus by making all corrections.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical approval for this study was assured by the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (01.20.2020/3) of the researcher’s University. The author does not have any conflict of interest with any of the participants in this study. Before the interviews, first, the participants were informed about the research and their rights. Then, they were asked whether they would like to participate in this study. The researcher and the volunteer participants signed the informed consent form. In this form, the researcher stated that the personal information of the participants will be kept confidential and that the data obtained within the research will be used for scientific purposes only. The participants stated that they voluntarily participated in the research and that the researcher could use the opinions expressed within this research anonymously for scientific purposes.

### *Results*

In this section, first, the types of humor the participants used were presented. As the answers to the second question, the study tried to explain why they use humor. Finally, the participants’ overall thoughts on humor usage through metaphors were revealed to define what the phenomenon of “humor use in school settings” means for teachers.

#### *Humor Types Used by Teachers*

The findings show that the participants usually mixed the humor types with each other. Sometimes, what they call a joke can actually be a witty banter or a prank. Hence, the types of humor shown in Table 1 reflect the meanings attributed by the participants to the types of humor as a result of their own knowledge and experience.

The most commonly used types of humor in school settings are jokes (90.9%) and wits (81.8%) respectively. For example, T7 voices that he frequently jokes in his lessons:

Since I’m a little relaxed in class, I often make jokes if something is happening at that moment. But, of course, not to insult. I make it spontaneous. I am not planning to joke. I never use expressions that hurt or humiliate the others.

T8 tells one of his jokes:

I make jokes to my students about the teams they support. When I start the class, if there is nobody supporting my team, I say, “I’m leaving the class. I’m not teaching here.” And I leave the class. A few minutes later, I come back.

The participants’ use of witty banter (63.6%) was also quite common. They perceive witty banter as a kind of humor for amusing. Although the message is negative in witty banter, the aim of the source is to focus on socializing and not hurting. In this issue, T4’s speech is a good clarifying

**Table 1.** Humor Types Used by Teachers.

Humor types	Participants ( $n_{\text{total}} = 11$ )	$f$	% <sup>a</sup>
Joke	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T10, T11	10	90.9
Wit	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T8, T9, T10, T11	9	81.8
Witty banter	T1, T2, T3, T4, T6, T8, T9	7	63.6
Irony <sup>b</sup>	T3, T6, T8, T10, T11	5	45.5
Satire <sup>b</sup>	T3, T6, T9, T10	4	36.4
Prank	T8, T9, T10	3	27.3
Comic memories and stories	T2, T3, T7	3	27.3
Caricatures	T7, T8	2	18.2
Puns	T9, T10	2	18.2
Uttering comic voices and changing the voice	T5, T9	2	18.2
Funny anecdote	T3, T11	2	18.2
Teasing <sup>b</sup>	T3, T5	2	18.2
Sarcasm <sup>b</sup>	T11	1	9.1
Gestures, funny facial expressions	T3	1	9.1
Comic photos	T8	1	9.1
Epigram	T3	1	9.1
Imitation	T5	1	9.1

<sup>a</sup>Percentages about humor types indicate the ratio of usage among the total participants, for example, 10 of 11 participants (90.9%) used jokes.

<sup>b</sup>Intentionally aggressive humor types.

example: “Today, a few male teachers were laughing among themselves. I had a Frisbee in my locker. I gave them the frisbee and said: ‘You laughed a lot here. Take it out and play with it.’ I bantered like that.” Another participant, T8 tells his witty banter as follows:

Sometimes, our diet friends eat diet biscuits in school. I would annoy them. I would say, “What is this? No taste. No salt. It’s like horse food. Like hay.” They would get angry and then they would smile. We would banter with each other. Of course, without breaking and humiliating each other. Because I was eating that too. If I hadn’t eaten, I’d be teasing. It is something that can be done to someone who can understand you, not everyone.

These examples show that the teachers are socially close to each other and have high intimacy.

Some participants also use pranks (27.3%) to make the audience smile by getting them angry. For example, T10 states that he occasionally makes pranks (*Author’s note: The names were changed in this speech so as to keep the anonymity of the participant and his colleague.*):

In a meeting at school, the principal was looking for a volunteer teacher for a task. But nobody volunteered. I raised my hand and said, “My name is Serdar.” In fact, I am Suat. Thus, the task was left to Serdar. They wrote Serdar’s name. In fact, Serdar had not assumed that duty, but we had his name written.

Another example of prank voiced by T8: “Sometimes I change the place of teachers’ small things or put funny or joking notes in their lockers. Just for prank.”

Two other participants mentioned that they made humor by changing their voices (18.2%) and that the audience liked it. T5 gives the following example:

Sometimes, when talking to colleagues at school, when they are completely busy, like the voice of a child, I shout with all my strength. I say “Teacher, teacher.” They suddenly turn back with such an angry face. But I love waving my hands when they see me. I usually do this to my friends and, of course, to my students.

The other potentially positive humor types used by the participants were comic memories-stories (27.3%), caricatures (18.2%), puns (18.2%), funny anecdotes (18.2%), gestures-funny facial expressions (9.1%), comic photos (9.1%), and imitation (9.1%). For example, T2 says, “I usually make jokes and tell comic stories that I had experienced.” Another participant, T9 tells her puns like that: “For example, I teach the National Anthem to my students in primary school. They often sing it wrong. I make what they say more fun and interesting with puns. Children like it very much.”

To some extent, the participants also use negative humor. The results indicate two types of aggressive humor uses either consciously or unconsciously. The use of aggressive humor consciously seems to be low. The participants that use aggressive humor conscientiously said that they used irony (45.5%), satire (36.4%), sarcasm (9.1%), and teasing (18.2%). For example, T10 tells his aggressive humor use as follows:

Sometimes, when I am doing humor I first praise and then satirize him/her. Actually, you’re doing something like satire. If I am going to say a bad side of him/her, I say the good side first. If you say the bad side without saying the good side, he or she gets offended.

**Table 2.** The Purpose of Teachers' Humor Usage.

Categories and opinions <sup>a</sup>	Participants ( $n_{\text{total}} = 11$ )	$f$	% <sup>b</sup>
<b>FOR ENHANCING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS</b>			
To have intimate relations	T1, T3, T6, T7, T9, T10, T11	7	63.6
To decrease tension and conflicts	T3, T6, T9	3	27.3
An effective communication tool	T3, T6	2	18.2
To eliminate negative emotions	T6, T8	2	18.2
To understand people better	T3, T7	2	18.2
To show people that you care them	T5	1	9.1
To fit into the atmosphere	T3	1	9.1
<b>FOR CREATING POSITIVE WORK CLIMATE</b>			
To create a positive work setting	T2, T3, T5, T7, T8, T9	6	54.5
To be positive and happy	T2, T3, T4	3	27.3
To amuse and make people laugh	T4, T5	2	18.2
To keep away from ordinariness	T1, T3	2	18.2
<b>FOR PEDAGOGY</b>			
To keep students' attention and interest alive	T2, T7, T8, T11	4	36.4
To make the learning amusing	T2, T8, T9, T11	4	36.4
To decrease students' stress and tension	T3, T10	2	18.2
To make the learning easier	T8, T9	2	18.2
To give feedback to the students	T9	1	9.1
To socialize the students	T7	1	9.1
To correct mislearning	T9	1	9.1
<b>FOR PERSONAL LIFE</b>			
To juice the daily life up	T1, T6, T8, T9	4	36.4
To have a rest and relax	T1, T3, T8	3	27.3
To have a positive perspective about life and be happy	T3, T8, T10	3	27.3
To overcome destructive emotions	T1, T9	2	18.2
To control anger	T1	1	9.1
<b>FOR OFFENSIVENESS</b>			
To criticize	T6, T9	2	18.2
Oppress	T3	1	9.1
Humiliation	T6	1	9.1
To snub	T3	1	9.1
Sarcasm	T11	1	9.1
To break one's heart	T3	1	9.1
To be aware of the fault without breaking a heart	T9	1	9.1

<sup>a</sup>Capitalized bold phrases refer to the categories, and lowercase phrases refer to the opinions. <sup>b</sup>Percentages regarding the opinions indicate the ratio of the purpose of humor usage among the total participants, for example, three of 11 participants (27.3%) used humor to decrease tension and conflicts.

### Teachers' Purpose of Using Humor

The opinions of the participants about the purposes of using humor are shown in Table 2.

The results show that the participants mostly use humor to enhance their interpersonal relationships (81.8%). In this respect, T10 says, "I use humor to be more sincere, especially to people in my environment." T11 similarly expresses his opinions as "If I am in a circle of friends, I use it to animate, soften, or cheer the group up." T9 states that he uses humor as a means of alleviating conflicts and reducing tension:

Humor in a tense environment can reduce tension at first and provide an environment that allows the parties to think more intelligently. The humor used afterward is like cement that glues

and brings individuals closer together. When people laugh at something together, they feel the same emotions, so that they can better understand each other and focus on the solution better. So, of course, it can be used if you don't have a serious problem.

Most participants mentioned another aim of humor usage is creating a pleasant workplace climate (72.7%) in schools. For example, T3 expresses that they use humor to feel better and relaxed in the breaks:

We joke to throw our negative energy away during the breaks. I don't like to see sulky faces. Let people laugh, have fun. Let them relieve the fatigue and stress of the day. I just want them to understand that life is not just about working, getting tired, stressing, solving problems.



By saying that, he emphasizes that he uses humor to make organizational life more colorful and to make colleagues get rid of the routines of life.

The participants also emphasize that they use humor as a teaching tool (63.6%) to draw attention to the lessons and to make learning fun and to keep students' interest alive. In this regard, T8 stresses that he uses humor as a means of gathering attention and facilitating learning as follows:

In my first lessons as a teacher, I use humor to increase interest in me. When the students are distracted in class, I use it to make a smile, and focus them on the topic again because I think you can learn better when you laugh.

It is also seen that humor is used to reduce the students' tension and stress, to facilitate learning, to correct misleading as a feedback tool, and to socialize students. For example, T10 states that tension and stress can also be thrown away thanks to humor: "I use it a lot in my classes, especially in exams. Students are very stressed in their exams. Their stress reduces when you approach them with humor." However, only T9 tries to integrate humor with the course content to use it for educational purposes. She stresses that humor helps her to correct her students' mistakes without offending them. She voices that humor also makes learning more effective by drawing attention to the misconceptions. She expresses her thoughts as follows: "When I make humor, the children both laugh and realize their mistake. Thanks to humor, they are not offended. They realize their mistake without getting upset." She also declares that she uses humor to make learning both enjoyable and easy. In this regard, she quotes, "For example, when I say the lyrics of a song, or when I talk, I suddenly sing with a melody. Or suddenly, I switch to music."

Furthermore, participants use humor for enhancing their personal life (54.5%). Humor is especially used to add color to daily life, to rest, and relax. For example, T1 says, "I think, humor is a thing that we should often use in our daily lives. It adds color to life. It helps you to enjoy life." Thanks to humor, he tries to tell that life becomes more colorful and enjoyable. T8 states that he uses humor as a means of coping with negative feelings in his life: "My philosophy of life is based on laughing. There's enough trouble in life. Humor makes us forget them."

Although it is the least usage form, some participants use aggressive humor (36.4%) as well. They sometimes use humor to criticize, humiliate, oppress, or belittle the people around. Besides, they voice that humor types, such as sarcasm, can sometimes be used to make one aware of his mistake without breaking him. Although they aim not to break the others by using sarcasm, sarcasm itself is offensive and aggressive. It will possibly have destructive effects on the other party. Because of its potential to alienate others and damage relationships, this humor style is potentially detrimental to psychological well-being, when one uses it excessively (R. A. Martin et al., 2003). For example, T3 says, "Not humiliating, not disparaging. If he sees himself as superior in

some way, I sometimes use humor to declare his place, to criticize that he is not superior in that respect." T6 added,

I had made a wit about a friend of one of my feminist friends. I had said spinster to her friend. That's what she was taken for. Then she told me. I thought I usually didn't do that. But one can subconsciously sometimes revile someone else to polish oneself, even if he doesn't want to.

### *Metaphors Regarding Teachers' Own Humor Usages*

Metaphors are important because they subconsciously reveal the meanings we place on concepts in a holistic way with all their naturalness as well as objectivity. In this step, the study sought to determine the participants' humor styles and usage aims via metaphors (Table 3).

The metaphorical analysis in this part was conducted through the cognitive theory of metaphors of Lakoff and Johnson (1980a). According to cognitive theory, metaphors are conceptual devices that make sense of human experiences (Tepebaşılı, 2013). That is why metaphors regarding teachers' own humor usages were important to make sense of the opinions that existed in the first two questions.

Eleven participants produced 10 metaphors. Seven of the metaphors produced by eight participants refer to positive humor usage (eight of 11 participants = 72.7%). Two of the participants described their use of positive humor with the "flower" metaphor. T1 clarified her sense of humor like this: "A fragrant flower. Like a flower that makes people happy with its smell. . . But thornless. That is, a sense of humor that does not humiliate or hurt people." The other participant, T9, expressed his opinion as follows:

It's like a flower. Because I don't make black humor. I make joyful, positive, entertaining things. The flower is also beautiful. Visually beautiful. It gives off nice scents. It spreads positive emotions around. My humor like a flower really puts the atmosphere in a good mood, emits good smells, and gives a beautiful image.

Another positive use of humor was expressed by T7 with the "toy" metaphor:

It's a toy. If you take care of it, touch it, raise its hand, it moves. So, I don't make much humor if I don't interact with someone. Just as the toy is motionless, passive. But if someone prepares a suitable environment, I contribute and continue with humor. So, I'm not usually the first joke teller in the environment. But when humor is produced, I don't stay behind. You know, toys are also liked by kids.

T7 actually considers his use of humor close to affiliative humor. He says that to make humor, someone has to mobilize him. In fact, T7's thought points to a new style of humor that has been uncovered in this study, the passive-affiliative humor.

**Table 3.** Metaphors Regarding Teachers' Own Humor Usages.

Categories	Metaphors <sup>a</sup>	Image field <sup>b</sup>	Aim of humor usage	Humor styles
Positive humor	Flower (T1, T9)	Pleasant odor, fragrant, thornless, innocuous, happiness, cheerful, beautiful, intimacy, tolerance, spring, positive emotions	To make people happy without hurting others	Affiliative
	Toy (T7)	Lifeless, passive, need somebody to be moved, amuses children, makes happy	To create a delightful climate	Passive-affiliative
	Caterpillar (T4)	Pretty, harmless, positive connotation	To create positive emotions To make happy	Affiliative
	Turkish delight (T11)	Sweet, soft, likable, gives happiness	To create a positive climate To develop sympathy	Affiliative
	Mixer (T10)	Movement, integration, avoiding standstill climate	To inject energy to the setting To abolish monotonous and stable atmosphere	Affiliative
	Spices (T2)	Delicious, the existence of it depends on the choice, bitter, sweet, sour, likable or unlikable	To enrich the communication as an elite tool To contribute with positive emotions	Partial-affiliative
	Fabric softener (T5)	Softener, odorless, refresher, eliminates bad odors	To decrease conflict and tension	Shy-affiliative
	Hot Kebab (T3)	Bitter, delicious, appetizing, encouraging, harming effect on urinary system	To make the self and others happy To amuse oneself at the expense of making the others upset	Affiliative, aggressive, or self-enhancing
	Cat (T6)	Ungrateful, flightiness, contingent, selfishness, self-seeking, randomness, clumsy, scratching, injuring, making happy	To make own self happy To make the self and others happy To amuse oneself at the expense of making the others upset	Affiliative, aggressive, or self-enhancing
	Fox (T8)	Intelligence, prank, craftiness, selfishness, pragmatism, clever, deceive, making a fool of	To make own self happy To create positive emotions for oneself and to share them To amuse oneself at the expense of making the others upset	Affiliative or aggressive

Note. The metaphorical analysis in this table is based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980a) cognitive theory of metaphors.

<sup>a</sup>The codes in brackets refer to the participants. <sup>b</sup>Image fields refer to the possible meanings regarding the metaphor (see also Tepebaşıllı, 2013).

T4 stated that she has the use of positive and affiliative humor with the “Caterpillar” metaphor. She explains her rationale as follows:

I was thinking of a caterpillar. Maybe it has a cute face. A smiling face. Humor makes people laugh, like a caterpillar’s face. The face of the caterpillar makes you happy, creates positive emotions in you. At least I’m trying to make humor for that purpose.

The other positive metaphor produced by T11 is “Turkish Delight.” He explains his reason like this: “Something like a Turkish delight, which always leaves something sweet in the mouth. Leaves a taste. It is soft. Loved by people. It gives people happiness.”

T10 likens his use of humor to “a mixer.” He mentions that his humor adds energy to the atmosphere, eliminates monotony, and keeps attention alive. He clarifies as follows:

I’d liken it to a mixer. Especially in meetings, the atmosphere becomes very monotonous. When I make a joke, the environment gets confused. Everybody gets alive. That’s why I’m a little bit like a mixer. Of course, I am trying to express something positive with mixer. Because people start to sleep during a long-lasting meeting. The mixer activates something that is actually stagnant. So is humor. It sets the stagnant atmosphere in motion. It adds energy to the environment.

T2 likens her own humor to “spice” as follows:

I cannot say that I am a must-have humorous person. That’s why I say “spice.” Meals would not be unsalted, but they can be spiceless. But with or without spices, the meal tastes. . . I think I’m like a spice because I don’t make so much humor. I mean, my humor can be or not. But if I make humor, it makes the meals taste good.

T2 emphasizes that she does not always make humor, and she is not a highly sought-after person in her social environment as a humorist. But she is also loved in the environment when she makes humor. In this case, T2’s humor style can be referred as a partial-affiliative humor style.

Another interesting metaphor is T5’s “Fabric Softener.” T5 explains as follows:

I liken it to a fabric softener. I am ready to use it at any moment. I know I’m going to get great results when I use it. But since there is no environment to use it, it always stays in the box. Sometimes, I hesitate because there is always a conflict in the school. I know that this softener is needed to change the environment. For people to be closer, and together. But I’m afraid if I can’t make the laundry soften or smell good. I like using humor with my friends. But sometimes, I hesitate. Sometimes, I am too shy to use humor.

Through this metaphor, her humor style can be described as shy-affiliative humor.

Apart from the positive humor usage, three metaphors refer to the use of situational humor (three of 11 participants = 27.3%). Hot kebab, cat, and fox metaphors show that some participants tend to use affiliative, self-enhancing, and aggressive humor from time to time. For example, through his “hot kebab” metaphor, T3 clarifies the constructive and destructive sides of humor usage as follows:

So, it’s nice to eat, but it’s not very nice afterwards. (*The researcher asks: “What do you mean by that?”*) (*We are laughing.*) Although sometimes the person in front of me says that s/he is not broken, sometimes, my sayings can exceed the limit. Sometimes, I regret them. Later, I wonder if I didn’t tell it. But I still can’t stop saying it. You know, sometimes you can’t stop eating that bitter thing, even knowing it’s painful. A little bit of humor is like that, I think.

A hot kebab is a delicious dish, as well as being bitter. Whether alone or with someone, many people like to eat hot kebabs. It gives people happiness. The results show that T3 has self-enhancing humor, affiliative humor, and sometimes aggressive humor depending on the situation.

T6 sees its use of humor as constructive and sometimes destructive, like T3. T6, who likens his own humor to “a cat,” explains his reason:

You know, cats also have some ungratefulness. Sometimes, they don’t know its owner and go to whoever gives bread or food. I mean, sometimes, I don’t do humor to a person who likes humor. But sometimes, I do humor to people who don’t like humor. There are times when I make tactless jokes or humor in the workplace. That’s why my humor is like a cat. It’s ungrateful when you don’t use it well. In other words, because of your humor, you can also fall into a humorless human position. He needs a good feed so that he doesn’t betray.

Cats are both cute animals and make everyone happy. However, they can sometimes scratch you. In this respect, it can be concluded that T6’s humor sometimes makes the people around happy and sometimes makes them upset. This shows using both affiliative and aggressive humor styles. As a matter of fact, when T6 talks about the use of humor, he says that he can unintentionally hurt the people in front of him with humor. Besides, some people share their loneliness with cats. Cats make them happy as a good friend. In this respect, the study shows that T6 uses self-enhancing humor as well.

Furthermore, as in the “fox” metaphor, the findings of the study indicate the use of affiliative and sometimes an aggressive humor style that emphasizes the participant’s subjective well-being with clever but selfish feelings. T8 says,

I’d say fox. It’s very mischievous. I love joking. I used to joke with my friends as “Inspector is coming.” Or I used to give “Yellow Envelope” to them (*Author’s note: “Yellow envelope” represents the punishment given to the employee by the principal in the Turkish bureaucracy.*). That’s why, fox. You know,

cunningly. In other words, I don't think humor will be humor without intelligent and foxiness. I can't think of a stupid humor. I think people who produce humor are very smart people.

## Discussions and Conclusion

In this study, to understand the teachers' use of humor in the school settings, the humor types they used and the aims of using humor were sought together with the metaphors. The fact people selected different metaphors indicated that although they all were focused on the same social entity, they each might have experienced and understood that experience quite differently (Bredeson, 1987). Thanks to the metaphors, the researcher had an opportunity to look more in depth at teachers' humor use experiences in school settings, and their understanding of them.

Joke, wit, witty banter, prank, comic stories, caricatures, puns, comic voices, funny anecdotes, funny gestures, comic photos, epigrams, and imitations were the potentially positive humor types used by the teachers in school settings. Accordingly, the results on humor types showed that the participants' sense of humor usually targeted being happy. Considering that laughter evokes positive emotions on people (Nikopoulos, 2017), making positive humor in workplaces positively affects the mood of the employees (George & Jones, 2012).

It was also determined that the participants, as the source of humor, had the same feeling for the target. However, the effect of humor on the target may vary depending on the emotion of the target and the type of humor. Therefore, it is important to use humor consciously. Because humor is like a sharp double-edged sword (Field, 2009; Meyer, 2000), it may cause unfavorable consequences as well as favorable ones depending on the current feelings of the target. To clarify, as shown in Table 1, a participant who makes a wit can cause emotional consequences on the target, such as being happy, neutral, sadness, or anger, although he is happy himself as a source. For example, T3 quoted, "Once, I received a warning. I had made a wit about a friend of one of my feminist friends. I had said spinster to her friend. That's what she was taken for." As seen in this example, T3 felt that both he and his friend would be happy. But he unconsciously upset his friend.

The results also provided evidence that the participants use negative humor in the form of irony, satire, sarcasm, and teasing that are potentially aggressive. These types of humor have a devastating effect on the other side and are offensive. They refer to inappropriate uses of teacher humor (Wanzer et al., 2006) because aggressive teacher humor creates negative effects on students such as less enjoyment, more boredom, and anger (Bieg et al., 2019). Moreover, the happiness of the source in aggressive humor is unhealthy and refers to its negative well-being (Şahin, 2018). Positive types of humor can also inadvertently make the other party feel negative. However, the results show that these types of humor are

basically intended to make the parties happy. But it may unintentionally damage the other party. This shows that the participants tend to use humor unconsciously, unplanned, and more spontaneously.

In brief, the use of positive humor types was in the majority. Accordingly, we can say that teachers usually prefer affiliative humor style. The fact that positive humor types, such as jokes, wit, and witty banter, are used mostly in school settings is valuable in terms of a positive organizational climate and managerial processes. Furthermore, Cooper et al. (2018) found in their study that positive instructor humor improved the climate of the classroom and strengthened the relationship between the student and the instructor. Yet, few teachers use the aggressive humor style. Given that offensive humor is an inappropriate humor and is not correlated with student learning (Wanzer et al., 2010), teachers must avoid using aggressive humor in the classroom. As in the case of humor usage, which may lead to unconscious aggression, school administrations can assume the responsibility to raise awareness and eliminate the negative consequences of the use of conscious aggressive humor.

As for the aims of humor use, the results showed that the participants mostly use humor to evoke positive emotions in school settings and to enhance their interpersonal relations. Within the framework of this result, it can be said that affiliative humor style is frequently used by teachers. Accordingly, it is very important for teachers to have positive humor styles to improve organizational life and teaching processes (Altinkurt & Yılmaz, 2016).

The second aim of humor usage was creating a pleasant workplace climate in schools. As mentioned in a study by D. M. Martin et al. (2004), managers and employees use mostly positive humor to enhance the work climate. Similarly, the current study shows that more participants make positive contributions to the atmosphere of the school by using humor. A positive work climate indicates a valuable factor in terms of both contributing to the better education process of teachers and assisting managers in planning and implementing these processes.

Furthermore, the results revealed that participants use humor for enhancing their personal life as well. The aim of humor use for enhancing personal life also shows that those teachers preferred to use self-enhancing humor style. Humor is likely to help individuals to cope with personal problems and thus can enhance well-being (E. Holmes, 2005). The present results show that the participants are likely to use humor as a coping mechanism as well. It is important in terms of subjective well-being for teachers to use humor to add color to their lives, relax, and rest.

The use of humor in the sense of facilitating interpersonal relations, enhancing personal life, and creating a pleasant atmosphere point to the existence of a meaningful and inspiring basis in terms of managerial humor to develop a positive organizational climate. Results regarding the aim of humor usage also revealed that the participants use humor to

strengthen intimate relationships, make others feel valued, reduce conflicts and tensions, create effective communication processes, cope with negative feelings, and contribute to common harmony. Humor engenders positive feelings among employees by lessening external threats, thereby bonding employees (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Furthermore, those who have fun at work are also more likely to be more engaged in their work and, as a result, to perform more creatively (Fluegge-Woolf, 2014). In this sense, the results reveal that there is a convenient environment for school management to establish effective communication processes, to manage potential conflicts, and to enhance group cohesiveness.

Another important result of the study was the use of humor in instruction. The results indicate that humor is used as a teaching tool in classes to draw attention, to make learning fun, and to keep students' interest alive. The present results, which is similar to the results of Balta's (2016) study, show that participants have positive manner on the use of humor in their teaching. However, unplanned and spontaneous use of humor is frequent in classes. They produce humor that includes mostly extracurricular and daily life issues rather than humor related to the course content. Related to this, Ravichand (2013) emphasized that specific goals and objectives of using humor in educational facilities need to be predetermined and clear in the mind of the teacher. Otherwise, humorous extracurricular conditions in the classroom may cause potential distracting consequences (Bolkan et al., 2018). The interest of the students toward the content of the course may be shifted to the content of extracurricular humor. Therefore, the humor, which is not directly related to the educational activity, may not show the effect expected by the participants (Field, 2009). Such use of humor will only act as a tool for creating a pleasant environment and having fun; in educational terms, it will not produce the desired results (Chabeli, 2008; Jeder, 2015; Krause, 2015). In their study, Bieg and Dresel (2018) found that teacher humor unrelated to course material was negatively associated with the enjoyment, intrinsic motivation, and elaboration of student learning in teacher level. Moreover, negative humor is disruptive and impacts negatively on a student's learning (Chabeli, 2008). The important thing in this process is the use of positive humor related to the content of the course. Similarly, Bieg et al. (2019) stated that only course-related humor is effective, and aggressive humor should be avoided by teachers. In a study conducted by Deiter (2000), the students mostly expressed that they remembered the subjects associated with humor better. Furthermore, Bieg and Dresel (2018) suggested teachers to use humor related to course content to draw the attention of students, to provide easy-to-remember illustrations and clarifications, and to emphasize anchors for content elaboration.

Overall, the results regarding the use of instructional humor were found to be largely inconsistent with IHPT. According to the IHPT, content-related humor is beneficial and positively associated with student learning (Wanzer et al., 2010). However, the results of this study indicate that

teachers generally prefer extracurricular humor in the classroom. Therefore, to use humor in educational settings, teachers should use it carefully, be prepared, and be planned. Nevertheless, the results showed that humor was used consciously for educational purposes in classrooms, albeit partially. Although it was reported that content-related positive humor is rarely used in classroom, it has a constructive effect on learning according to the IHPT (Wanzer et al., 2010). Therefore, it is important that teachers should use more content-related positive humor in their classes.

The last noteworthy result why teachers use humor was that even if they do not intend, some participants use humor to offend other people to some extent. They use this kind of aggressive humor to criticize, humiliate, oppress, or belittle the people around. This kind of humor use is not suitable for both the managerial and instructional efficiency (Bieg & Dresel, 2018; Evans & Steptoe-Warren, 2018; Lyttle, 2007; Wanzer et al., 2010).

According to the results of the metaphorical analysis, the participants mostly use positive humor and, to some extent, situational humor. Regarding the humor styles, affiliative humor is the most preferred one. Furthermore, the findings led to the need to subdivide the uniform affiliative humor style of R. A. Martin et al. (2003) into passive-affiliative, partial-affiliative, and shy-affiliative humor styles. So much so, it is appropriate to evaluate these humor styles within the positive humor styles. Based on the results, the passive-affiliative humor style may be attributed to people who are not usually the first joke teller and whom need to be triggered to make humor by people around. Regarding the partial-affiliative humor style, we can say that it refers to people who do not always make humor in social settings but who use positive humor when they do. Furthermore, less, but selective and correct usage of humor may explain the partial-affiliative humor style better. Another humor style that has been uncovered in this study is shy-affiliative humor. It refers to the person hesitating whether she or he should produce humor in groups or not as she or he fears that her or his humor will not be appreciated and will be useless.

The results regarding the metaphors also implied that some participants sometimes use self-enhancing, affiliative, and aggressive humor styles. It is thought that the purpose and mood of the person producing humor have an effect on the humor styles used. Among the negative humor styles, the participants tend to use less aggressive humor. In addition, the results revealed that they do not use self-deprecating humor. This understanding shows that the participants tend to mostly use positive humor styles. Those who wish to promote communication and enhance human relations in schools are most likely to achieve these goals by using affiliative, instead of aggressive humor (Crowe et al., 2019). Given this situation, the predominant use of humor styles that include positive language can form the basis for establishing positive and constructive relationships in school settings, maintaining education more productively in a cheerful and pleasant

atmosphere, and superior-subordinate relationships based on consensus and understanding.

In conclusion, this research offers an understanding of teachers' use of humor in school settings and can be used to guide teachers and school administrators who want to use humor effectively, both in managerial and educational contexts. The current study also provides evidence that humor is a useful tool in managerial and pedagogical processes in school settings.

## Limitations

Next to its contributions, the study has limitations as well. As a qualitative study, the results reflect the views of 11 teachers working in seven different schools in the central districts of Antalya. Another limitation of the study is that the metaphors of hot kebab, mixer, and Turkish delight produced by the participants are culturally significant to Turkey. However, they are not generalizable to different cultures. That is why caution is recommended concerning the generalizability of the results. Future researchers might explore the generalizability of the results of this study in different school settings and different cultures.

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## Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was assured by the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (01.20.2020/3) of the researcher's University. Before the interviews, first, the participants were informed about the research and their rights. Then, they were asked if they would like to participate in this study. The researcher and the volunteer participants signed the informed consent form.

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