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## VOLLEYBALL: BEHIND THE PROFESSIONALISM

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### ABSTRACT

Volleyball is a sports discipline that requires solid teamwork and practice in order to achieve individual goals, with a high level of excitement and pleasure to watch. Therefore, the aim of this research is to reveal the expectations of volleyball players behind professionalism through the metaphors they create for their own disciplines. 37 athletes performing in volleyball leagues participated in the study. The phenomenology design, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the research. The data of the research were obtained by applying the personal information form to the athletes and asking the athletes "like volleyball...../similar; because..." by completing the sentence. The data collection tool was applied by the researchers. Participants took part in the research on a voluntary basis. The data were analyzed by content analysis technique, and the stages of naming, screening, category development, validity and reliability, calculating and interpreting the frequencies of the obtained metaphors were followed in the analysis of the data. The metaphors produced by the athletes are divided into four conceptual categories: "emotion", "element of success", "struggle", "source of livelihood". It is thought that the evaluation of the pressure on the athletes can have a positive effect on the athletes, knowing that volleyball has different needs such as work and income sources, as well as the increasing environmental factors in every age group, as well as the fact that the athletes move away from the game and entertainment form with the transition to professionalism. akalenin başında, konuyu kısa ve öz biçimde ifade eden ve 250-300 kelimededen oluşan İngilizce Abstract bulunmalıdır.

**Keywords:** Volleyball, sport, metaphor, perception, phenomenology, qualitative research.

## INTRODUCTION

Volleyball, which is one of the five most practiced sports in the world (Moreno et al., 2016), is a sports discipline that requires solid teamwork and practice in order to achieve individual goals, with a high level of excitement and pleasure to watch (Afacan & Afacan, 2021). It is stated that the discipline is in need of perceptual cognitive skills and psychomotor skills such as coordination, decision making, reaction time, collective and individual tactical actions of the team and emotional control (Andrade et al., 2016; Mroczek et al., 2013). In addition, as other features of the volleyball discipline, it is possible to talk about different components such as requiring a higher cognitive demand and strategy, causing increased mental exhaustion and a necessity for players to react to constantly changing situations in an externally paced environment (Krenn et al., 2018).

The fact that volleyball is one of the most popular disciplines in our country, remaining on the agenda with the successes achieved in recent years and successful athletes drawing an exemplary picture both on and off the court; reflects as positive feedbacks as it supports the perspective of young people in society who take athletes as role models and their participation in sports. While participation in elite level sports requires exposure to highly stressful training and competition environments (Foster and Chow, 2020), the behavior of the volleyball players during the game also includes quick, intentional and conscious responses to the changing conditions of the court (Zhou, 2021). For this reason, it is stated that the success in volleyball does not only depend on physical characteristics, motor and functional abilities or technical and tactical skills; but also, the cognitive and psychological part has great importance for athletes (Milavić et al., 2013). Taking into consideration the variability, complexity, and rapid changes in sports activities and expectations (Aktaş and Erhan, 2015), the mere focus on technical tactics, training, and preparation stages would be insufficient when it comes to the presence of professional athletes and their pursuit of a successful career. Determining personal expectations and needs of volleyball, as well as the technical characteristics required for volleyball, is important for the athletes to make an impression. Knowing the results obtained with the help of metaphors will enable the steps to be taken in this direction to be evaluated and put into practice in a better way.

Metaphors are defined as an analogy that enables a person to map a particular experience using terminology from a different experience, thus allowing an abstract and complex pattern or situations to be understood (James, 2002; Neuman and Guterman, 2022) and gathering of seemingly separate cognitive, emotional, perceptual and experimental elements (Robert & Kelly, 2010). The use of metaphors is often beyond people's conscious awareness (Steen, 2017); thus it can enrich the narrative approach towards career development by providing a resource for understanding the content, process, and rationale of people's experiences (Creed & Nacey, 2021). According to Triggs et al. (2011), metaphors can be used to overcome the difficulties brought by changing conditions in terms of both daily life and career. In this context, it is considered important to discover metaphors in different discourses (Liu and Chen, 2020) that is serving as a learning mechanism (Nissim, 2020).

It is known that sports, one of the professions in which metaphors are frequently used, has a strong impact on society and is an important part of social reality (Kaya et al., 2018). The metaphors of the athletes, on the other hand, can function as a framework that carries the researchers further on the subject of to be seen from a different perspective and be understood about their needs by making the intuitive information that the athletes have about themselves, their disciplines and sports stakeholders more clear.

When the literature is examined, studies can be found examining through metaphors; children's point of view and drawings of the concepts specific to the basketball discipline (Çaredar et al., 2022), the perceptions of the individuals actively interested in zumba (Ceylan and Kozak, 2021), the metaphors and drawings of the athletes trained in traditional Turkish archery in sports schools (Pekel et al., 2023), the thoughts of the swimming coach candidates towards the swimming discipline (Gündoğdu and Aygün, 2018), the opinions of the folk dance instructors to the concept of folk dance (Karabulut and Doğan, 2018), the attitude of esport trainers regarding the concept of esports (Pekel et al., 2022) and the perceptions of athletes engaged in ait gun sports (Pekel et al., 2021). On the other hand, for the field; runnign (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2017), swimming (McNarry et al., 2019) mixed martial arts (Spencer, 2013; Vaittinen, 2014), running experiences of visually impaired athletes (Hall et al., 2023; Jackman et al., 2022) and elite junior hockey players (Todd and Edwards, 2021) are also found as various phenomenological studies.

In the field of education, there are many studies that reveal the metaphorical perceptions of teacher candidates for physical education and sports (Güllü, 2021), university students for sports (Kaya et al., 2018), university students for the concepts of game and physical activity (Arıcan, 2021), individuals who are students in the field of sports sciences for the situation about being a student in this field (Çeyiz et al., 2021) and teachers working in different disciplines in primary and secondary schools on the concepts of "physical education" and "sport" (Karagün, 2021). Studies that reveal the perceptions of professional athletes about their own disciplines are found rarely.

It is thought that when athletes receive support in different aspects such as their psychological needs, their motivation towards learning can rise and they can be encouraged to fully reveal their potential, and also, a positive effect can be produced on their ability to cope with negative events and emotions that may be encountered. Therefore, the aim of this research is to reveal the expectations of volleyball players behind professionalism through the metaphors they create for their own disciplines.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This research is designed accordingly to the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods. Phenomenological designs provide a proper research basis for examining phenomena that are not completely strange to us but also not fully understood (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). Phenomenology is standing for the

studies intending to study the facts that we are familiar with and not fully understand (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Phenomenological research is defined as an approach in which the researcher tries to understand and explain how a person or a group of people experiences a certain phenomenon from an individual perspective (Kalaian, 2008), and the experiences of the individual are revealed in the studies conducted with this approach (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Ethical approval of the study was obtained from Gazi University Ethics Commission with the research code number 2022 - 1439 and dated 04.10.2022.

### **Participants**

In this research, the participants were determined by convenience sampling. In the research, convenience sampling method was used to determine the sample group. 40 athletes from Turkish volleyball leagues participated in the research. However, data analyzes were carried out on 37 participants, as a result of the elimination of the forms that are empty or does not make any sense among the metaphors generated.

### **Data collection and analysis**

The data collection tool was applied by the researchers after receiving the necessary permissions. Moreover, all participants took part in research on a voluntary basis. The data collection tool consists of two parts; while first part includes demographic characteristics of the participants, the second one is the part requiring them to complete the sentence “volleyball is like/similar to....; because....”, in order to determine the perceptions of the athletes about the concepts of volleyball through metaphors.

Each metaphor was discussed separately and each sentence was analyzed in itself. The data of the research were analyzed using content analysis methods. Content analysis is the process of coding (quantifying) what people say and write when clear instructions given (Patton, 2014). The metaphors obtained for the analysis of the data were numbered from 1 to 37 and studied separately. Coding was done by taking the explanations made about volleyball into consideration. When coding, a code list was made in accordance with the meaning of the metaphor. Thus, the data were tried to be made conceptive by taking the relations between these codes into account and reaching the category that best describes the feature. Metaphors are widely used in qualitative research because of their ability to manage the diversity in research data (categorizing with ease), correlate between the data and present the data to the reader (Sadik & Sari, 2012). To ensure the validity and reliability of qualitative research; the stages of the showing data and analyzes to individuals who are researched, and presenting the commentaries of these data and analyzes to the experts were followed through (Ekiz, 2009). Moreover, the themes created by two experts from outside of the research and the themes created by the researcher were compared, the number of plus and minus in the comparison was calculated and the reliability of the research was evaluated with using the formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) (Reliability = consensus/consensus + disagreement). In qualitative researches, a desired level of reliability is achieved when there is a 90% or a greater accordance between the expert and researcher ratings (Saban, 2008). The accordance between metaphors was gathered under the same themes at a rate of 90 percent. Direct

quotations were made as another reliability method, by including the expressions used by the athlete to describe the metaphor.

**Statistical analysis**

Microsoft Excel database programs were used to analyze the data and frequency and percentage values were calculated for the themes found. Expressions that have similar meanings are gathered under the themes; as “emotion”, “success factor”, “struggle” and “source of living”. Which participant the metaphors belong to is indicated by numbering in the given examples. As a result of the analyzes carried out, the metaphors were divided into significant themes in terms of their differences and similarities, and they were charted.

**FINDINGS**

In the research, 37 metaphors, admitted as acceptable for the concept “volleyball”, were examined and construed with using the content analysis method. In the process of determining conceptual categories, related literature was reviewed and the metaphors produced by athletes playing volleyball professionally were divided into four conceptual categories, considering the studies include definitions of volleyball. The codes and themes related to the metaphors created by the volleyball players involved in the research for the perception of "volleyball" are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Codes and Themes of the Metaphors Towards the Concept of “Volleyball” That Are Made by Professional Volleyball Players Participated in Research

Conceptual themes	Codes
Emotion	My daughter, living and breathing, sea, life, source of happiness, my lifestyle, love, nature, family, turkish bath
Success factor	Breathing, a virtuous struggle, the best thing I can do, character
Struggle	Life, chess, life, lifestyle, challenge, mountain, hourglass, driving a straight gear, commander
Source of living	Moral and material profession, occupation, source of living, my lifestyle, life, theater

According to Table 1, it is observed that there are similar codes under different theme groups. The metaphors in these codes are stated in different themes for the reason they have other meanings. For example; in accordance with the idea attributed from the statement of the participant 36 for the metaphor “life”; Volleyball is like life because “I’ve been doing it since I was a kid. I enjoy training with my teammates. It’s my passion.”, the code is stated under the theme of “Emotional factors”. As for participant 23, on the other hand, since the metaphor “life” is used with the explanation “volleyball is like life, because it comes in every part in my life with what I do”, the code is stated under the theme of “being a challenging factor”.

**Emotional factor**

Just as people have some basic physiological needs, the need for being happy also plays an important role in life. The concept of happiness, in psychology; it is figured as “subjective well-being” (Myers and Diener, 1995),

and it is also expressed as the individual's ability to get pleasure out of life and feel great (Layard, 2011). Sports, which has an important place in terms of psychology along with social and physical development, offers individuals the opportunity to socialize. Along with such progress, it also brings experiences such as establishing positive relationships, obeying decisions and rules (Bagwell, Newcomb & Bukowski 1998; Rubin et al., 2006). They are subjective feelings experiences as a reaction to events in the mind of the athlete, such as the expectation of an upcoming event or an event in the athlete's environment (Lazarus, 2000). There are 13 metaphors in the path of professional volleyball players being an element of emotion. Examples of metaphors produced by the participants are given below.

*"Volleyball is like / similar my daughter, because; it is at the center of my life." (Participant 30)*

*"Volleyball is like / similar family, because; you share everything with your teammates such as your sadness, happiness, success, failure, pain, love etc." (Participant 13)*

### **Struggling factor**

Sports considered as an element that brings the gains of socialization and being a healthy individual in addition to the concepts of achievement, gaining dominion, competition; and also, it is considered as many factors as a tool, an occupation or an entertainment for the continuation of these gains (Sevinç & Ergenç, 2017).

Although sports are completely based on movement and effort, it is the whole of gymnastics, training and competitions, which are essential for the formation of these concepts (Ataman, 1972). The essential movements have to be carried out within a set of rules and spirit of struggle. Individuals may encounter positive events at certain times and negative events at certain times both in their private and business lives (competitions, training). Mentally strong individuals are able to keep the positive/negative moments they encounter under control, concentrate on the work they are responsible for, and act calmly despite the events that are beyond their control, and may have the idea of turning all these situations into an advantage for themselves, compared to those who are not strong (Yıldız, 2017). The high need for perfection, in addition to energizing individuals; it leads them to look for possibilities to take on challenging tasks, acquire new skills, and achieve good productivity (Deci & Ryan, 1995; Harackiewicz et al., 2002).

In this category, professional volleyball players explained the characteristics of metaphor attributed to the source, with describing the basic elements of sports as it's building block, indispensable etc. On the other hand, when metaphors by the athletes in the category of volleyball as an element of struggle are examined, it has been explained with such expressions as; war, the power within us, struggle, maze.

*"Volleyball is like / similar a commander, because you can't be a commander without winning a war"*  
*(Participant 35)*

*“Volleyball is like / similar importance of the struggle and unity, because you can never be successful without fighting in a war together” (Participant 9)*

#### **Success factor**

To acquire the pleasure and the joy from an activity, it is essential for an individual to discover the proper activity for self. During the activities experienced in such condition, the one can't keep track of time and individual experiences that moment at peak point (Özdemir et al., 2020).

*“Volleyball is like / similar the best thing I can do in life, because I promised myself for this to happen since my childhood.” (Participant 34)*

*“Volleyball is like / similar to a victorious war, because I feel myself like a commander for winning.” (Participant 33)*

#### **Source of living factor**

Sometimes athletes can consider the sports they are doing as their profession. Athletes have various roles in their life besides their profession/sports. They have personal needs to maintain with both themselves, both with their friends and spouses. Doing sports, besides it's individual benefits, helps them to realize the meaning of life and boosting their self-esteem with keeping a balance between daily life and professional life which effects both psychologically and sociologically (Roy, 2016). It is stated that the lives of individuals do not only consist of professional life, but also in the personal life there are responsibilities and roles that individuals are responsible for. The effort to performing all these responsibilities and roles simultaneously causes stress, which is mentally and physically exhausting for the individual (Genç et al., 2016). There are 8 metaphors in the professional volleyball players' source of living factor. Various metaphor situations stated by the participants are listed below.

*“Volleyball is like / similar moral and material profession, because I can make a living with the money I earn from volleyball.” (Participant 28)*

*“Volleyball is like / similar source of living, because I earn my financial income from this profession.” (Participant 23)*

#### **CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION**

When reviewing the literature, it is seen that the studies on metaphore are quite limited in the field of sports sciences, and existing studies generally focus on popular sports disciplines and physical education lessons (Asma et al., 2016; Ayyıldız, 2016; Namlı et al., 2017).

According to the data obtained within the scope of the research, the metaphors generated by professional volleyball players about their own disciplines were collected in the categories of emotion (f=14), element success factor (f=4), struggle (f=11) and source of living (f=8). When the codes of the metaphors of the categories are examined; it was stated by the participants that individuals regard volleyball as a lifestyle, perceive it as an element of achieving success in a virtuous way by demonstrating one's character, see it as a struggle and a source of living for themselves as they are professionally playing it.

As stated in the vision and mission of the Turkish Volleyball Federation, the metaphor of 'emotion' most produced by volleyball players coincides with the vision of representing our country in the best way in volleyball disciplines by spreading volleyball across the country and creating a school (Türkiye Voleybol Federasyonu, 2022). Making volleyball a school is only possible if elite athletes, who are among the most important stakeholders of the discipline, perform their own disciplines more passionately and have a strong emotional bond to their disciplines. In a study conducted by Yılmaz et al. (2014), the perceptions of national athletes in wrestling were examined and it was stated that the athletes generally showed a positive perception about their disciplines, as well as focused on the themes of happiness and income. In the study conducted by Demiral and Demir (2018), the metaphorical perceptions of the athletes interested in the judo discipline were analyzed and it was determined that they mostly revealed positive metaphors about their disciplines. Our research shows parallelism with other studies in this respect, both as stated in the TVF vision and when the studies in the literature are examined, since the athletes express positive opinions about their disciplines.

When the metaphors and the answers given by the athletes were examined, it was determined that although it was concluded that the concept of volleyball was mostly perceived positively, there were also negative perceptions. In a competitive environment brought by professionalism, the role of source of living should not be overlooked. In the metaphors obtained in our research, it is important that the athletes emphasize their source of living, since it also refers to their perspectives on the discipline and the difficulties brought by professionalism.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

The fact that the research is limited to the volleyball discipline only; It will contribute to the determination of the negative perceptions of the professionals interested in the field towards volleyball on a wider scale, to the elimination of negative perceptions, to the organization of activities for young people and families who are interested in the discipline, and to the discipline's reach to large masses. After all, since examining the metaphorical perceptions of professional athletes from different disciplines about their own disciplines will determine the positive and negative aspects of the discipline, the suggestions discussed should be taken into consideration by all internal and external stakeholders as much as possible.



## ETHICAL TEXT

"In this article, journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics rules, journal ethics rules were followed. The author is responsible for any violations that may arise in relation to the article." Ethical approval of the study was obtained from Gazi University Ethics Commission with the research code number 2022 - 1439 and dated 04.10.2022.

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