



## Athleticism Through the Eyes of Athletes: A Metaphor Study

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### Abstract

In addition to being one of the oldest sports branches known in the history of athletics, it is also used in metaphors (analogy) as the 'ancestor of sports' branches. It is also important to know how athletes in this sport see athletics from the many branch bars in it. In this context, the aim of this research is to reveal the sport of athletics from the eyes of athletics athletes through metaphors. The research is in the qualitative research model and it is in the case-science pattern. In the research, 136 (female:59, male: 77) athletes were allowed to participate voluntarily by using the purposeful sampling method. In the research, the said, 'Athletics is for me.....because it's similar.....' an example of a metaphor sentence is used. Content analysis was performed by simulating and coding the reason. As a result, 131 valid answers were taken into consideration. In the analysis of the data, coding and sorting, category development, validity and reliability stages were performed, and frequency (f) and percentage (%) values were determined in the Jamovi 2.3.21.0 statistical program for quantitative analysis. According to the results of the research, 116 valid metaphors and 5 categories were created out of 131 metaphors. The categories were determined as continuity of existence (n:42), source of joy (n:33), philosophy of life (n:20), purpose in sport (n:21) and invalid metaphors (n:15). As a result, it has been seen that athletics athletes produce positive metaphors for athleticism. Metaphors can be used as a tool to motivate athletes in the field of athletics

**Keywords:** Athleticism, Metaphor, Simile

## Atletlerin Gözünden Atletizm: Bir Metafor Çalışması

### Öz

Atletizm spor dalı tarihte bilinen en eski spor dallarının biri olmasının yanında spor dallarının atası olarak da metaforlarda (benzetme) kullanılmaktadır. Atletizm spor dalı eski tarihlerden günümüze kadar popülerliği korumuş ve her zaman ilgi görmüştür. İçerisinde birçok dal barından bu spor dalındaki sporcuların atletizmi nasıl gördüklerini bilmek de önemlidir. Bu bağlamda bu araştırmanın amacı atletizm sporcularının gözünden atletizm spor dalını metaforlar yoluyla ortaya çıkarmaktır. Araştırma nitel araştırma modelinde olup olgu-bilim desenedir. Araştırmada amaca yönelik örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak 136 (kadın:59, erkek:77) atletin gönüllü olarak katılması sağlanmıştır. Araştırmada 'Atletizm benim için.....benzer çünkü.....' metafor cümlesi örneği kullanılmıştır. Benzetilen ve sebebi kodlanarak içerik analizi yapılmıştır. Sonuç olarak geçerli 131 cevap değerlendirmeye alınmıştır. Verilerin analizinde, kodlama ve ayıklama, kategori geliştirme, geçerlilik ve güvenilirlik aşamaları gerçekleştirilmiş ve nicel analiz için Jamovi 2.3.21.0 istatistik programında frekans (f) ile yüzde (%) değerleri belirlenmiştir. Araştırmanın bulgularına göre 131 metafordan geçerli 116 metafor ve 5 kategori oluşturulmuştur. Kategoriler; 'varlığın devamlılığı', 'sevinç kaynağı', 'hayat felsefesi', 'sporda amaç' ve 'geçersiz metaforlar' olarak belirlenmiştir. Katılımcıların cinsiyetine göre kadınların varlığın devamlılığı; 'su', 'hayat', 'şeker', erkeklerin ise sevinç kaynağı; 'hayat', 'su', 'nefes', 'yaşam' kategorilerinde daha fazla metafor ürettikleri saptanmıştır. Atletizm dalına göre koşularda; 'su', atmalarda; 'hayat', atlamalarda; 'kum', çoklu branşlarda; 'su' ve yürüyüşte; 'yemek' en çok üretilen metaforlar olmuştur. Sonuç olarak atletizm sporcularının atletizm spor dalına yönelik olumlu metaforlar ürettiği görülmüştür. Atletizm branşındaki sporcuları motive etme noktasında metaforlar birer araç olarak kullanılabilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Atletizm, Metafor, Teşbih

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## INTRODUCTION

Within daily life, it does not seem possible for any individual to complete his/her day without moving, running, jumping from one place to another or throwing any object. These skills have evolved from the body movements that people performed in primitive times to survive, and today it has turned into a ritual that is expected to have the most Olympic spectators and break records. Athletics is a modern sport in which athletes push their bodies to the limit and break records that were formerly thought to be unbreakable (Özükan, 2003). Athleticism is a global sport with 214 national federations worldwide (World Athletics, 2024). The meaning of the world athletics, which is one of the basic sports, is 'Athlos' in Greek which means success, gift, war, and competition. Athletics, in addition to being known as the ancestor of sports branches, is also the centre of the modern Olympics (Yapıcı and Ersoy, 2003). Athletics is a very complex sports branch that is based on running, throwing and jumping and is divided into running, throwing, jumping, combined events and race-walking branches as a classification (Turkish Athletic Federation, 2024). Choosing and continuing athleticism as an athlete is challenging because athleticism training is performed in the open field despite all kinds of natural conditions and athletes must compete individually with themselves first. In this context, there are features that distinguish athletes of an individual sports branch such as athleticism from other team athletes.

The characteristics of individual and team athletes differ from each other due to different psychological needs such as motivation, team spirit, individual struggle, mental endurance, etc. (Sabiston et al., 2016). It is known that there is a relative age effect in track and field athletes; athletes born at the beginning of the year have an advantage in middle distance and sprint branches (Gunderson et al., 2022) and there are more athletes in track and field than in other branches. In studies conducted with track and field athletes, it is known that the empathy levels of track and field athletes are at a medium level (Akpınar et al., 2018) and their level of commitment to sports is higher than that of the students of the faculty of sports sciences (Cicioğlu et al., 2019). According to a recent research result, the mental toughness scores of female athletes are higher than male athletes (Yarayan et al., 2024). Moreover, in a study, it was found that younger track and field athletes were more stressed, more assertive and more respectful towards their competitors, and the stress level decreased as the training year increased (Efek, 2021). These results show that the psychological characteristics of athletes may differ and the opinions of athletes may change according to gender, years of training and being a professional athlete in athleticism. It has been observed in the literature that there are opinions about the doping of athletics athletes and the reasons for turning to athletics sports (Çelebi et al., 2017; Şimşek and Gökdemir, 2006). In these studies, survey questions created by the researchers were used and in-depth examination was not performed. The use of metaphor, which is an effective way to reveal the opinions of athletes in depth, is widely used because it is suitable for the transmission of concepts in the field of sports through metaphors (İnan et al., 2019).

Metaphor use can be said to have entered the literature in the early 1980s by cognitive linguists led by George Lakoff and Jerome Feldman (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Metaphors are explained in the sense of 'understanding or experiencing something according to something

else' (Lakoff and Johnson, 2010). Metaphors can carry more meaning than a word; the reasons underlying the concepts can be revealed (Kovecses, 2010). According to Mobarki and Alzahrani (2024), the use of metaphor in speech can carry positive and negative implications and the metaphor used can change according to the experience and the same metaphor can be used for different meanings. In the field of sports, it is possible to frequently see researches in which metaphors are used as tools. In the reviewed literature, the metaphorical views of different sample groups in the field of sports sciences; female academicians (Yanar and Akpınar, 2023), students taking physical education and sports courses (Avşar and Yanar-Tunçel, 2023), students of sports sciences faculty (Karadağ et al., 2023), coaches (Gür and Taşkın, 2022), athletes (Güler and Cengiz, 2017) and sedentary individuals were examined (Kurtipek, 2019). Furthermore, it can be said that it is a deficiency that qualitative research on a basic sports branch such as athleticism is not limited to the sports branch of athletes.

In a study involving the opinions of track and field athletes, elite level Spanish athletes stated that some of their coaches thought that athleticism should be prioritised over studies, while others thought that studies should be prioritised over athleticism (Asensio-Castañeda et al., 2023). In this study, the opinions of athletes about their coaches, not about athleticism, were investigated. In only one study in the literature, the views of the athletes in the sample group, including track and field athletes, on 'recruited' athletes were tried to be revealed through metaphors (Parasız et al., 2021). In the program called 'Childish Sports' broadcast on TRT Sport Star, television channel, track and field athletes were asked to explain athletics in one word (TRT Sport Star, 2024). The child athletes here described athletics using only metaphors, but did not comment on the reason. When the literature was examined, there was no research in which the opinions of track and field athletes about athletics were investigated. Based on this, it is aimed to examine the opinions of licensed athletics athletes in Türkiye about 'athletics' in depth through metaphors. By conducting an in-depth analysis with the answers that athletes will give, the motivational sources of athletes can be determined and these metaphors can be used as a motivational tool in training. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2010), metaphors can be a guide for our future actions, in this respect, it can be said that revealing the views of athleticism athletes about 'athleticism' will fill this gap in the literature. This study aimed to reveal the views of athletes about 'athleticism' with the help of metaphors. In this context, answers to the following questions were sought;

- What are the metaphorical views of athletes towards the concept of 'athleticism'?
- Do athletes' views on the concept of "athleticism" change according to gender?
- Do athletes' views on the concept of "athleticism" change according to their discipline?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Model**

This study, in which the views of athletes towards athleticism are tried to be revealed with the help of metaphors, was a qualitative study. Qualitative research can be defined as 'a type of research in which results are produced without using any statistical method or numerical tool'

(Yıldırım et al., 2015). The use of metaphor, which is one of the ways within qualitative research approaches, is important in terms of examining the opinions, feelings or thoughts of individuals against any situation in detail (Girmen, 2007).

### **Study Group**

The sampling of the research was determined by using the random sampling method for the purpose. The purposeful random sampling method is the purposeful classification of systematic and randomly selected case samples in accordance with the purpose of the research (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). Since the diversity and depth of information are becoming important in qualitative research, the number of samples is changing (Baltacı, 2018). When the literature is examined, it is seen that the number of samples in metaphor studies varies from 47 (Okur, 2021) to 94 participants (Çoğaltay and Aras, 2018). In this context, it was thought that it would be sufficient for the minimum number of participants to be 120 for this research. Athletics sport branch is grouped into 5 main branch (running, jumping, jumping, combined events and race walking) according to the grouping determined by the federation (Turkish Athletic Federation, 2024). In this context, it is aimed to collect data from athletes in these 5 categories. A total of 136 (female: 59, male: 77) athletes participated in the study. After excluding 5 questionnaires including invalid answers, the answers of 131 (female:59, male:72) athletes were evaluated. The mean age of the participants was (female: 16,5±4,7, male: 18,7±8,4) and athletes have been participating in competitions as track and field athletes for an average of 4,8 years. The branches of the athletes were divided into 5 classes as running (n:84), throwing (n:9), jumping (n:10), combined events (n:10) and race walking (n:18).

### **Data Collection Tools**

**Demographic Information Questionnaire:** The demographic information questionnaire created by the researchers was used as a data collection tool in the study. The questionnaire includes questions about the gender, age, height, weight and sports branch of the athletes.

**Metaphor Sentence Questionnaire:** In the study, the metaphor sentence ‘Athleticism is similar to ..... for me because .....’ was used to produce a metaphor in the first blank and to write the reason in the second blank. The data were collected from athletes on a voluntary basis via google forms.

### **Data Analysis**

Since the metaphors obtained in the research are used as a descriptive tool, content analysis, one of the qualitative research approaches, was used in the analysis of the data (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016). Content analysis is the process of defining, coding and categorizing data (Patton, 2014). Firstly, it was checked whether the participants answered the questions sincerely and correctly in the data, and the questionnaires of 5 participants who did not answer or had incomplete answers were not evaluated. Afterwards, it was checked whether the participants produced metaphors or not, and the metaphors produced by the participants who wrote sentences instead of metaphors (n: 9) and produced unjustified metaphors (n: 6) from 131 valid questionnaires were not included in the categories and were collected under the category called ‘invalid’. Valid 116 metaphors were divided into themes depending on the selected metaphor and the "reason" in the "because" part. Even if it is the same metaphor, it is

possible to see the same metaphors in different categories because the explanation after the "because" part differed.

**1. Coding and Separation:** At this stage, firstly, the metaphors produced by the athletes were transferred to the excel table and it was checked whether the athletes could produce metaphors. At this stage, it was determined that 6 of the data did not write a justification after the metaphor sentence and 9 of the data wrote a sentence instead of a metaphor. For this reason, 15 of the 131 responses were marked and it was determined that they would not be included in any category. After the coding stage, 116 metaphors were determined by considering the subject of the metaphor, the source of the metaphor and the relationship between the metaphor subject and the source. As an example of unjustified metaphors that will not be included in any category; 'Athleticism is like apricot for me because there is no Malatya without it (A-32). Here, a metaphor was produced, but as the justification after the because part, a justification not related to athleticism was written. As an example of those who wrote a sentence instead of a metaphor; "Athleticism is important for me because it is a serious sport" (A-28). Here, the athlete could not produce a metaphor in the first part and only wrote a sentence. A total of 15 such data were marked to be collected in a separate category. For the other 116 (50 different) metaphors, the category development phase was started.

**2. Category development:** After the coding stage, 4 different categories were developed by using codes according to the common justifications of 116 metaphors. The developed categories were 1. *continuity of existence*, 2. *source of joy*, 3. *philosophy of life* and 4. *purpose in sports*. The 116 metaphors produced by the athletes were assigned to 4 different categories according to the codes they contained. Apart from these categories, 15 data that the athletes could not produce metaphors and produced invalid metaphors were included in a category called '5th invalid'. The metaphors produced (n:116) were matched in the category of 'continuity of existence' (n:42), 'source of joy' (n:33), 'philosophy of life' (n:20), 'purpose in sports' (n:21) and 'invalid' (n:15).

**3. Validity and reliability:** To ensure the validity of the research, the analysis of the research was explained in detail and the validity was ensured by matching the justifications of the metaphors produced by the athletes with the coding method. To ensure the internal reliability of the research, the accuracy of the categories, and pairings created by the researchers, 'Expert opinion' was applied. At this stage, the metaphor list and categories were sent separately to 4 faculty members who are members of Düzce and Yalova Universities and have studies in this field, and they were asked to place the metaphors in the categories. Then, the reliability formula developed by Miles and Huberman (  $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Consensus}}{\text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement}}$  ) was used to determine the consistency of the matchings conducted by the experts and the matchings conducted by the researchers (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to this formula, a result of 90% and above means a high level of reliability. There are codes (happiness, excitement, fun, life, indispensable, success, water) that are in disagreement as a result of expert opinions. According to the evaluations after the expert opinion, it was seen that a consensus (reliability) was achieved at the rates of 92% (consensus:120), 90%, (consensus:118) 95% (consensus:124) and 96%(consensus:126), respectively. These results show that this research reached the desired

level of reliability. After this stage, the quantitative data analysis stage was started in which frequency (f) and percentage (%) values of the data were calculated.

**4. Quantitative data analysis:** At this stage, 116 metaphors (50 different) and categories produced by the athletes were coded and transferred to Jamovi 2.3.21.0. statistics program and frequency (f) and percentage (%) values of the data were calculated. All metaphors were analyzed according to gender and sports branch and tables and graphs were created.

**RESULTS**

In this study, which aimed to obtain the views of athletes on the concept of athleticism through metaphors, the following results were obtained.

**Table 1.** Metaphors produced by the participants

Metaphors	F	%	Metaphors	F	%	Metaphors	F	%
1 Water	19	16	18 Health	2	2	35 Comfort zone	1	1
2 Life	12	10	19 Sweet	2	2	36 Sandglass	1	1
3 Survival	7	6	20 Alcohol	1	1	37 Fruit	1	1
4 Breath	6	5	21 Atom (drink)	1	1	38 Motivation	1	1
5 Success	5	4	22 Space	1	1	39 Ocean	1	1
8 Sugar	5	4	23 Sea	1	1	40 Game	1	1
6 Entertainment	4	3	24 Discipline	1	1	41 Meal	1	1
7 Chocolate	3	3	25 Trekking	1	1	42 Money	1	1
9 Food	3	3	26 Energy drink	1	1	43 Compass	1	1
14 Target	3	3	27 Flashlight	1	1	44 Number	1	1
10 Family	2	2	28 Future	1	1	45 Chicken sauce	1	1
11 Love	2	2	29 Sky	1	1	46 Nail	1	1
12 Home	2	2	30 Excitement	1	1	47 Feather	1	1
13 Sun	2	2	31 Hobby	1	1	48 Indispensable	1	1
15 Sand	2	2	32 Peace	1	1	49 Egg	1	1
16 Happiness	2	2	33 Heart	1	1	50 Hot	1	1
17 Oxygen	2	2	34 Book	1	1			
						<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>100</b>

When Table 1 was examined, it was seen that the participants produced 116 metaphors in total and these metaphors were 50 different metaphors. The first 5 metaphors that the participants preferred to use the most were water (n:19), life (n:12), survival (n:7), breath (n:6) and success (n:5). The ‘continuity of existence’ category, which is the first of 5 different categories in which 116 metaphors produced by the participants were matched, was presented below (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Continuity of existence category and produced metaphors

1. Category	F	%	Metaphors
<b>Continuity of existence</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>32</b>	water (17), life (6), breath (5), food (3), survival (2), sky (1), egg (1), space (1), ocean (1), oxygen (1), feather (1), love (1), heart (1), nail (1)

*Metaphors examples;*

*Athleticism is similar to water because there is no life without it (AT-13)*

*Athleticism is similar to life because I feel like I'm living in training (AT-97)*

*Athleticism is similar to breathing because I feel alive as I run (AT-95)*

When Table 2 was analyzed, it was seen that the participants produced 14 different 42 metaphors (32%) in this category. The most preferred metaphors of the participants were water (n:17), life (n:6) and breath (n:5), respectively. The metaphors produced by the participants under the category of ‘source of joy’ were presented below (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Source of joy category and metaphors produced

2. Category	F	%	Metaphors
Source of joy	33	25	entertainment (4), success (3), chocolate (3), survival (3), life (3), sweet (2), happiness (2), family (2), excitement (1), trekking (1), health (1), water (1), game (1), sugar (1), number (1), alcohol (1), motivation(1), hobby (1), energy drink(1)

*Metaphors examples;*

*Athleticism is similar to **entertainment**, because **without athleticism, life has no taste** (AT-19)*

*Athleticism is similar to **success** because **it increases my motivation** (AT-36)*

*Athleticism is like **chocolate** because **I'm addicted to it too** (AT-136)*

*Athleticism is similar to **life** because **athleticism makes me happy** (AT-54)*

*Athleticism is **survival** life because **I can't be happy without it** (AT-49)*

When Table 3 was analyzed, it was found that the participants produced 19 different 33 (25%) metaphors in this category. The most preferred metaphors of the participants were fun (n:4), success (n:3), chocolate (n:3), life (n:3) and survival (n:3), respectively. The metaphors produced by the participants under the category of ‘philosophy of life’ were presented below (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Life philosophy category and produced metaphors

3. Category	F	%	Metaphors
Life philosophy	20	15	life (2), sand (2), survival (2), target (2), compass (1), future (1), home (1), discipline (1), success (1), flashlight (1), oxygen (1), book (1), love (1), hot (1), sea (1), sea (1)

*Metaphors examples;*

*Athleticism is similar to **survival** because **it taught me who I am** (AT-10)*

*Athleticism is similar to **sand** because **it helped me not to recognize myself** (AT-15)*

*Athleticism is similar to **life** because **athleticism is labor** (AT-37)*

*Athleticism is similar to **target** because **it is like an end point** (AT-66)*

When Table 4 was analyzed, it was found that the participants produced 16 different 20 metaphors (15%) in this category. The most preferred metaphors of the participants were survival (n:2), sand (n:2), life (n:2) and target (n:2), respectively. The metaphors produced by the participants under the name of ‘sports purpose’ were presented below (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Sports purpose category and produced metaphors

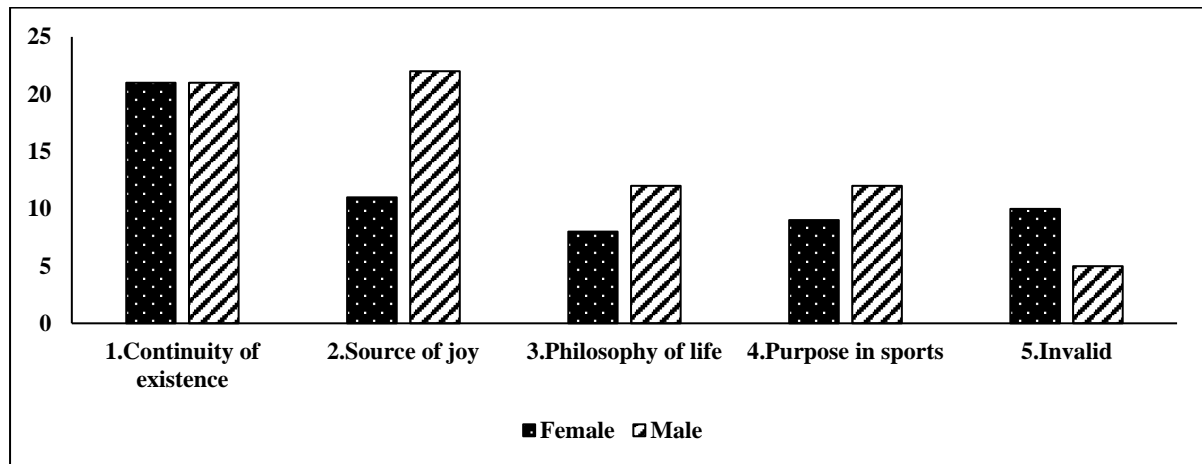
4. Category	F	%	Metaphors
Sport purpose	21	16	sugar (4), life (2), indispensable (1), money (1), success (1), peace (1), water(1), fruit (1), breath (1), home (1), meal (1), comfort zone (1), chicken sauce (1), sun (1), atom drink (1), sandglass (1), health (1)

*Metaphors examples;*

*Athleticism is similar to **sugar** because **it has to be constantly to be successful** (AT-32)*

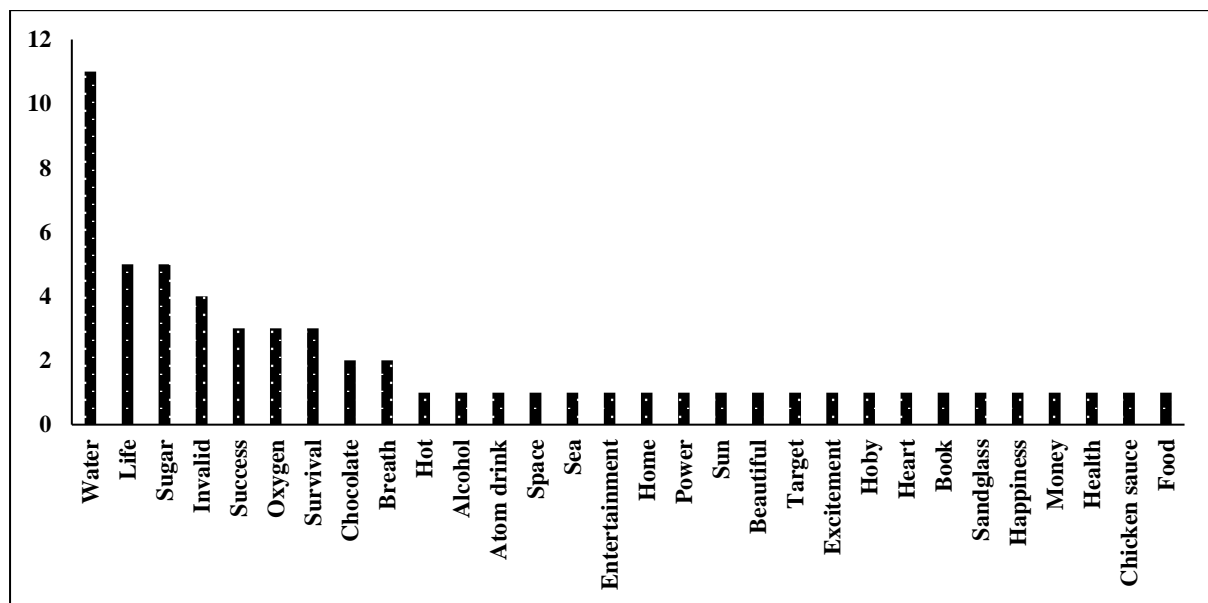
*Athleticism is similar to **life** because **it takes a lot of hard work to be successful** (AT-128)*

When Table 5 was analyzed, it was found that the participants produced 21 different metaphors (16%) in this category. The most preferred metaphors of the participants were sugar (n:4) and life (n:2), respectively.



**Graph 1.** Categories of metaphors produced by the participants according to gender

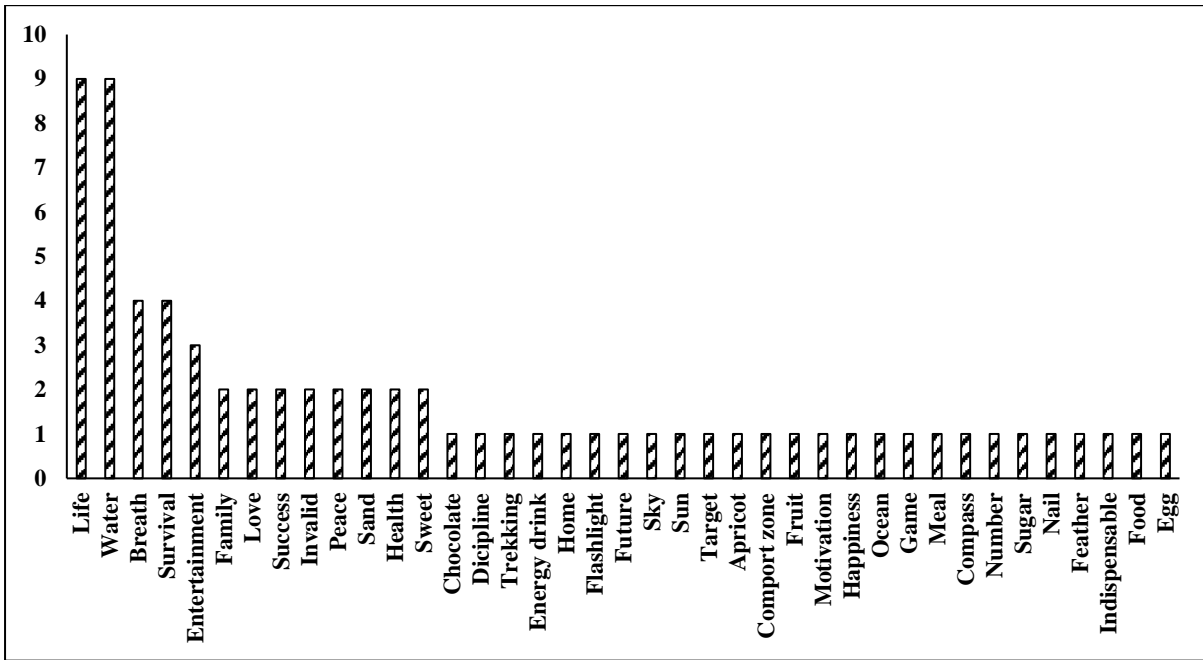
When Graph 1 was analyzed, it was seen that women produced metaphors in the category of ‘continuity of existence’ (n:21) and men produced metaphors in the category of ‘source of joy’ (n:22). The metaphors produced by women were presented in the graph below (Graph 2).



**Graph 2.** Metaphors produced by female participants

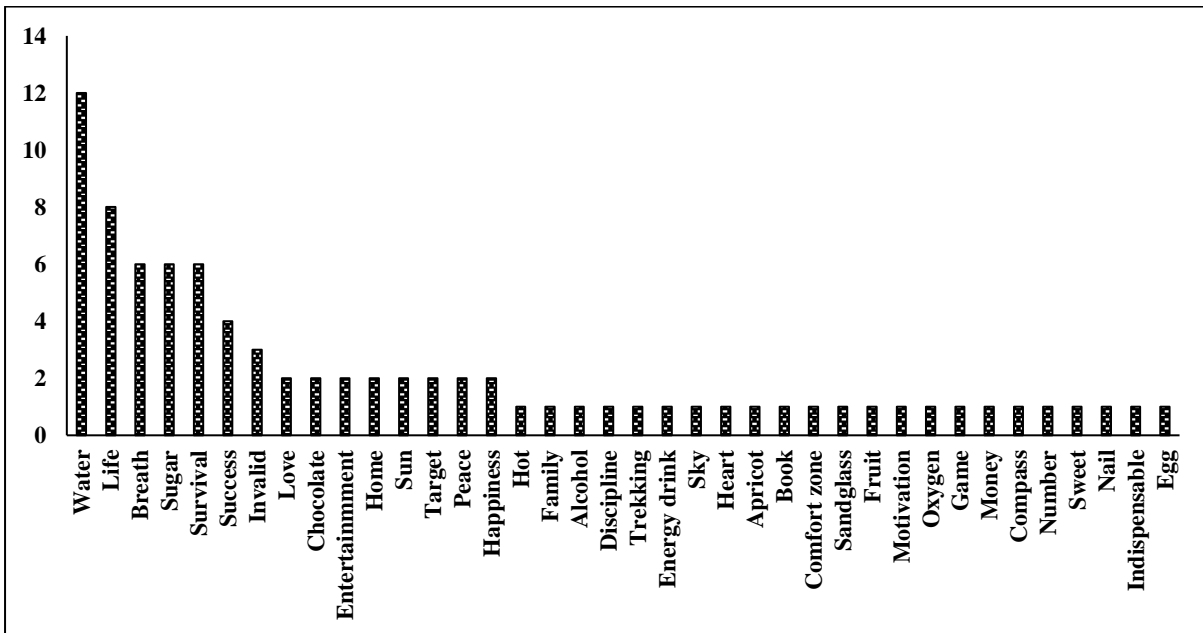
When Graph 2 was analyzed, it was seen that the most preferred metaphors of female participants were water (n:11), life (n:5) and sugar (n:5), respectively. The metaphors produced by male participants were presented in the graph below (Graph 3).





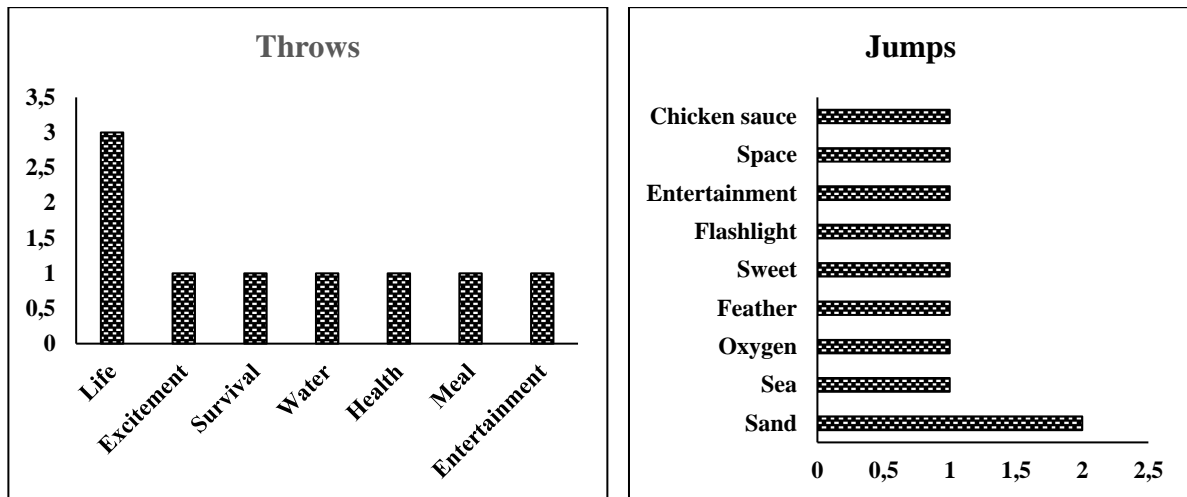
**Graph 3.** Metaphors produced by male participants

When Graph 3 was analyzed, it was seen that the most preferred metaphors of male participants were survival (n:9), water (n:9), breath (n:4) and life (n:4), respectively. The metaphors produced by the participants according to the ‘running’ branch in athleticism were presented in the graph below (Graph 4).



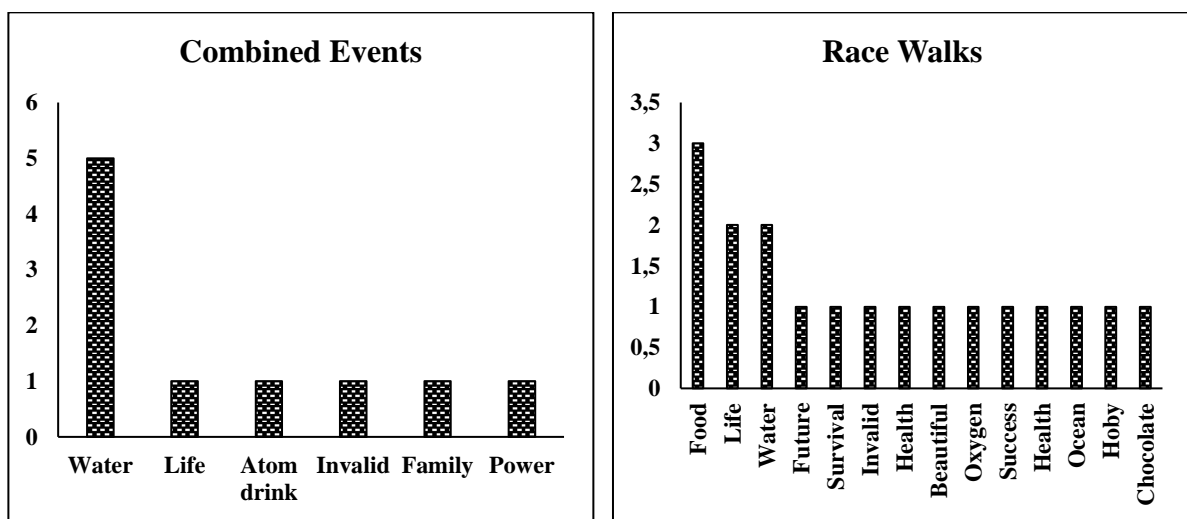
**Graph 4.** Metaphors produced by the participants in the running branch

When Graph 4 was examined, it was seen that the most preferred metaphors in this category by the participants (n:84) in the running branch were water (n:12), life (n:8) and breath (n:6), respectively. The metaphors produced by the participants according to the ‘throws’ and ‘jumps’ branch in athleticism are presented in the graph below (Graph 5).



**Graph 5.** Metaphors produced by the participants in the throws and jumps branch

When Graph 5 is analyzed, it is seen that the participants in throwing (n:9) and jumping (n:10) sports produced metaphors. It is seen that the participants in the throws branch mostly preferred the metaphor of life (n:2), while the participants in the jumps branch preferred the metaphor of sand (n:2). The metaphors produced by the participants according to the “combined events” and ‘race walks’ branches in athletics were presented in the graph below (Graph 6).



**Graph 6.** Metaphors produced by participants in combined events and race walks

When Graph 6 was analyzed, it was seen that the participants in combined events (n:10) and race walks (n:18) produced metaphors. It was observed that the participants in the multi-branches branch mostly preferred the metaphor of water (n:5), while the participants in the walking sports branch preferred the metaphor of food (n:3).

## DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

In this study, in which the views of athletes towards the concept of athleticism were tried to be revealed with the help of metaphors, the following results were obtained.

The first result of the study showed that the participants produced 50 different metaphors for the concept of athleticism and the most frequently produced metaphors were 'water' and 'life'. It was determined that the most preferred metaphors were gathered under the category of 'continuity of existence'. It is possible to come across studies in which metaphor is used as a tool in the field of physical education and sports in the literature. In a metaphor study conducted on physical education and sports teacher candidates, candidates were also asked to produce metaphors for the concept of exercise. The candidates used the metaphors of 'healthy living', 'water', 'food' and 'breath' the most (Türkeli, 2019). In another study, it was tried to reveal the alphas of prospective teachers and university students towards the concept of exercise through metaphors. Among the most produced metaphors in the research are 'breath', 'water' and 'life' (Kaya, 2019). In research aiming to determine the perceptions of individuals in different cultures towards the concept of sports through metaphors, opinions were taken from individuals in Germany and Türkiye. Individuals in Türkiye preferred the metaphors of 'life', 'health', 'water', 'breath' and 'requirement' the most (Yaşar, 2021). These research results support the conclusion that the 'water', 'life' and 'breath' metaphors used the most by the participants in our study are preferred. In addition, the athletes in our research preferred metaphors in which they saw 'athletics' as a very positive and indispensable element in life. Similarly, in the study where the reasons for choosing athletics were investigated by students who are athletes in secondary education, it was listed that students enjoy achieving success, love athletics and are appreciated by their friends (Şimşek and Gökdemir, 2006). The result of this research means that athleticism was not a sports to be performed without loving it and supports the fact that the metaphors produced by the athletes in this research were in the category of indispensable from life.

In studies conducted in the field of sports sciences, the numerical differences between male and female participants in the sample group are known (Walton et al., 2022). In this research, the metaphors produced by females and males were examined according to gender. The result of the study was that female athletes produced more metaphors under the name of continuity of existence and male athletes produced more metaphors under the name of source of joy. Both female and male athletes preferred "water" and "life" metaphors the most. It is suggested that metaphor expresses the emotions of individuals cognitively beyond language skills (De-Saint Preux and Blanco, 2021). It is known that men have a better level of psychological robustness than women in sporting events and are better able to control their emotions (Blanco-Garcia et al., 2021). A study conducted on Australian elite athletes concluded that female athletes experience more negative situations compared to male athletes, and men experience more financial difficulties (Walton et al., 2021). During the pandemic, the female athletes on the netball team in the Austrian Football League wanted to continue playing even though their wages were very low, except for personal ailments. This result suggests the conclusion that women take their responsibilities ahead of their financial expectations (Pavlidis and Rowe, 2021). These research results may suggest that the male participants in our study, unlike women, produce more metaphors related to athletics under the category of source of joy, and that men have different perspectives on athletics than women. In another study, the pessimism, optimism and psychological well-being of athletes according to gender were investigated, and it was found that women's life purpose, positive relationships with others and personal development sub-dimension scores were higher than men (Cnen et al., 2021). In our

research, it also supports the collection of metaphors produced by women under the continuity of existence. It can also be considered that the 'water' and 'life' metaphors most preferred by male and female athletes are due to the fact that the basic fluid that athletes most need in training is their purpose of existence.

Since athletics is a multi-branch sport, it is expected that athletics athletes will have different characters and have different psychological characteristics required by the branch. There is an opinion that personality significantly affects sports performance and determines discipline selection (Piepiora et al., 2019). When the athletics sport is examined, it is known that athletes competing in technical branches involving jumping and throwing can develop different characteristics and types of awareness compared to runners (Bulğay et al., 2022). In a study conducted in Türkiye, the perception of athlete identity of athletics athletes was investigated. According to the research results, it has been seen that the scores of athletes in the jumping branch in the social identity sub-dimension of athletes are higher than those of athletes in the running and walking branches (Aslan, 2024). In this study, athletes in the jumping branch, which is a technical sport branch, preferred the 'sand' metaphor the most, while athletes in other technical sports preferred similar metaphors. This result may suggest that athletes in the jumping branch have a different way of thinking than athletes in other branches.

In the sample group in this study, the running branch constitutes the highest proportion; the running branch have the highest number of athletes and coaches in athleticism (General Directorate Sports Services, 2022). Since the success of long-distance runners depends largely on their own efforts, it is known that the characteristics of personal responsibility, patience and humility develop more (Piepiora et al., 2019). A study conducted in Türkiye also examined the conscious awareness levels of athletics athletes according to their sports branches. According to the research results, it has been found that athletes who are sprinters have the highest average score in refocusing compared to other branches (distance, jumping and throwing) (Bulğay et al., 2022). In a study where the personality traits of sprinters were investigated, it was also found that athletes achieved high scores in perseverance, harm avoidance, innovation seeking, cooperation, emotion seeking and positive urgency (Gabrys and Wontorczyk, 2022). In this research, it is thought that the fact that athletes in the running branch produce the 'water', 'life' and 'breath' metaphors the most is due to the determined personality traits of athletes.

As a result, although athletics is collected under a single title, it has a complex structure with different branches. In this context, it has been seen that the metaphors produced due to different personality characteristics of athletes and different emotional characteristics required by sports branches are different.

### ***Suggestions***

- It can be ensured that athletes are motivated by using metaphors in athletics training.
- Taking into account the different branches and gender factor in athletics, the use of different metaphors may be preferred.
- This research aimed to determine the metaphorical perceptions of athletes about athleticism, and in future studies, opinions about different variables such as athletics aerialists and competitions can also be examined.

### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the researchers in this study.

### Researchers' Statement of Contribution Rate

MG and BG designed the study research design, MG and BG supervised the study, MG and BG collected the data, MG analyzed the data. All authors prepared and approval the final manuscript.

### Ethical Approval

For this study, the ethics committee approval was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University Institute of Social Sciences (Number: E-75732670-050.04-189669, Date:26.04.2024).

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