

## Modern Pentatlon'un Gerçeği

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### ORİJİNAL ARAŞTIRMA

#### Özet

Modern pentatlon, beş farklı modülasyonun tek bir etkinlikte birleştirildiği bir olimpiik spordur. Pentatlon sporcularının performanslarını geliştirmede fiziksel gereksinimlerinin bilinmesinin yanı sıra zihinsel ihtiyaçlarının da bilinmesi gerekmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu araştırma modern pentatlon sporcularının pentatlon kavramlarına yönelik metaforik algılarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmaya Ankara ilinde 2021 yılı içerisinde Modern Pentatlon disiplininde lisans sahibi 20 kadın ve 18 erkek olmak üzere toplam 38 sporcu katılmıştır. Araştırma nitel olarak hazırlanmış ve fenomenoloji yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışma için veriler toplanırken sporculara kişisel bilgi formu uygulanmıştır. Sporculardan formda yer alan "modern pentatlon ..... gibidir/benzerdir çünkü..." cümlesinin tamamlanması istenmiştir. Araştırmacı veri toplama aracını bizzat uygulamıştır. Ayrıca tüm katılımcılar çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Veriler içerik analizi tekniği kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Verilerin analizinde sırasıyla adlandırma, eleme, kategori geliştirme, geçerlilik ve güvenilirliğin sağlanması, elde edilen metaforların frekanslarının hesaplanması ve yorumlama aşamaları izlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, sporcuların en çok "denge ve mücadele unsuru olarak pentatlon" temasına yönelik metaforlar kullandıkları görülmüştür. Denge unsuru olma kategorisinde sporcular onlardan bekleninin aksine spor yaşamı dışında hayatta çeşitli rolleri olduğunu, hem kendi başlarına hem de eşleri ve arkadaşlarıyla birlikte sürdürmek istedikleri kişisel alan ihtiyaçları olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Aynı zamanda branşın dengeli ihtiyaçları olduğu eğer antrenörlerin yetersizliği durumunda bu dengenin bozulacağı endişelerini belirtmişlerdir. Mücadele unsuru olarak ise sporcular oluşturdukları metaforlarda sporcular modern pentatlon sporunun çok ciddi bir mücadele barındırdığını farklı 5 disiplin içermesinden ötürü sporcuların yüklerinin ciddi şekilde arttığı ve yapılan en ufak hataların bile ciddi sonuçlar doğurduğunu belirterek her hamlelerini planlamaları gerekliliğini vurgulamışlardır. Bunun yanı sıra başarı, önem/gereklilik ve duygu unsuru olarak tanımladıkları görülmüştür. Metaforlar incelendiğinde fiziksel gelişimin yanında sporcuların kişisel, sosyal ve fiziksel faydalar deneyimlediklerini, çünkü sporun becerileri keşfetme ve olumlu öz saygı geliştirme fırsatı sağladığını belirtmişlerdir. Duygu unsuru olma kategorisi incelendiğinde ise duyguların yalnızca deneyimlere anlam sağlamakla kalmadığı, aynı zamanda kişinin kendisini ve etkileşimde bulunduğu diğer insanları veya olayları düzenleyerek hayata da anlam kattığı belirttikleri görülmüştür. Sporcular kariyer basamaklarını tırmanırken çeşitli zorluklarla karşılaşır. Metaforların, sporcuların bu süreçte yaşadıkları psikolojik zorlukların ve kariyerleri boyunca değişebilen koşulların yarattığı sorunların üstesinden gelmek için kullanılmasının yaygınlaştırılması ve belli aralıklarla sporculara uygulanmasının, yapılan branşın sporcular üzerinde etkilerini göstermede etkili olduğu düşünülmektedir. Aynı zamanda sporcuların kaliteli antrenman yapmada aksaklıklar yaşadığı veya disiplinin çok pahalı olması nedeniyle modern pentatlon antrenmanlarının sporcuların ilgi ve beklentilerini karşılayacak şekilde düzenlemesi ve spora devam etmelerine özen gösterilmesi gerekliliği sporcuların oluşturduğu metaforlarda gözlemlenmektedir. Türkiye'de modern pentatlon sporcularını desteklemede sporun tüm bireyler için önemini farkına varılarak, sporcuların tam potansiyellerine ulaşmalarını sağlamak ve sporcuların disiplinden ne beklediklerini belirlemek için antrenör ve federasyonların çalışmalar yapmasına katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Modern pentatlon, spor, algı, metafor, nitel araştırma, fenomenoloji

## The Reality of the Modern Pentathlon

### Abstract

Modern pentathlon is an Olympic sport in which five different modulations are combined in a single event. In addition to knowing the physical needs of pentathlon athletes in improving their performance, it is also necessary to know their mental needs. Therefore, this study aims to determine the metaphorical perceptions of modern pentathlon athletes towards pentathlon concepts. A total of 38 athletes, 20 females and 18 males, holding a licence in Modern Pentathlon discipline in 2021 in Ankara province, participated in the study. The research was prepared qualitatively and phenomenology method was used. While collecting data for the study, a personal information form was applied to the athletes. The athletes were asked to complete the sentence 'modern pentathlon is like ...../similar because...' in the form. The researcher personally applied the data collection tool. In addition, all participants voluntarily participated in the study. The data were analysed using content analysis technique. In the analysis of the data, naming, elimination, category development, ensuring validity and reliability, calculation of the frequencies of the metaphors obtained and interpretation stages were followed respectively. As a result, it was seen that the athletes mostly used metaphors related to the theme of 'pentathlon as an element of balance and struggle'. In the category of being an element of balance, the athletes stated that contrary to what is expected from them, they have various roles in life other than sports life and that they have personal space needs that they want to maintain both on their own and with their spouses and friends. At the same time, they expressed their concerns that the branch has balanced needs and if the coaches are inadequate, this balance will be disrupted. As the element of struggle, in the metaphors created by the athletes, the athletes emphasised that the modern pentathlon sport involves a very serious struggle, that the loads of the athletes increase seriously due to the fact that it includes 5 different disciplines and that even the slightest mistakes have serious consequences and that they should plan their every move. In addition, it was seen that they defined success as an element of importance/necessity and emotion. When the metaphors were analysed, it was seen that in addition to physical development, the athletes experienced personal, social and physical benefits because sports provided the opportunity to discover skills and develop positive self-esteem. When the category of being an element of emotion was analysed, it was seen that emotions not only provide meaning to experiences, but also add meaning to life by regulating oneself and other people or events one interacts with. Athletes face various difficulties while climbing the career ladder. It is thought that the use of metaphors to overcome the psychological difficulties experienced by athletes in this process and the problems created by the conditions that may change throughout their careers should be expanded and applied to athletes at certain intervals to show the effects of the branch on athletes. At the same time, it is observed in the metaphors created by the athletes that modern pentathlon training should be organised in a way to meet the interests and expectations of the athletes and care should be taken to continue the sport because the athletes experience problems in quality training or the discipline is very expensive. It is thought that in supporting modern pentathlon athletes in Turkey, coaches and federations will contribute to the studies to ensure that athletes reach their full potential and to determine what athletes expect from the discipline by realising the importance of sport for all individuals.

**Keywords:** Modern pentathlon, sport, perception, metaphor, qualitative research, phenomenology.

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## Introduction

Various disciplines are exhibited in the Olympics, one of the most magnificent organizations related to sports from ancient times to the present. On the other hand, the modern pentathlon, which has been under the purview of the Modern Olympic Games since 1912, is an Olympic sport consisting of five different modalities (TMPF, 2021). The modern pentathlon, which combines somewhat conflicting disciplines such as shooting, fencing, swimming, equestrian, and athleticism in a single event, contains different skills (Kelm, 2010). It comprises swimming 200 meters (pool), fencing in the epee category, jumping over a maximum of 15 obstacles with a height of 110 cm in the equestrian field, 4×5 shots with a laser gun at a distance of 10 meters at 400 meters intervals during a total run of 3200 meters (TMPF, 2021).

The modern pentathlon is a sports discipline that requires courage, coordination, physical fitness, self-discipline and flexibility in ever-changing conditions, as well as being more difficult, expensive and time-consuming than focusing on just one piece of equipment considering the equipments used in the sport (UIPM, 2021). In the modern pentathlon discipline, which involves many skills, pentathletes must be in a good mental condition as well as their physical well-being, as high-level performance is required both due to the diversity of disciplines and to be successful in competitions.

Athletes encounter a variety of challenges while climbing the career ladder. Metaphors are emphasized to be used to overcome the psychological difficulties experienced by the athletes during this process and the problems created by the conditions that can alter throughout their careers (Triggs et al., 2011). Metaphors are not only some beautiful add-ons in language, but instead basic cognitive mechanisms that allow people to make sense of the world around them (Wegner et al., 2020). According to Schmitt (2005), metaphors enable individuals to compare abstract or complex phenomena with more concrete or experienced facts, thereby developing an understanding of unknown phenomena. According to Kesić and Muhić (2013), sports metaphors are the intersection of collective thought and wisdom obtained with a concise and metaphorical expression. Additionally, metaphors provide functions such as supporting individuals with their psycho-social problems (Spandler et al., 2014), creating new perspectives and helping to remember (Skorczynska, 2014). There are various studies on sports in the field (Pekel et al., 2021; Kurt and İlhan, 2021; Pekel et al., 2023), but there is no study specific to modern pentathlon.

Knowing how to express concepts and reach inferences through metaphors in modern pentathlon is essential. Also, it is critical that this situation assists athletes in overcoming the challenges they may face in their careers and that issues such as how the modern pentathlon

discipline is understood and perceived by the pentathletes are defined through metaphors. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the opinions of licensed modern pentathlon athletes about their discipline through metaphors.

## **Method**

### ***Research design***

In this study, which aims to reveal and analyze the metaphorical meanings attributed to pentathlon concepts by pentathletes, the phenomenology design, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used. Qualitative research is defined as a method that investigates real-world problems and provides deeper insights (Moser & Korstjens, 2017), inquiring about the problem it examines, interpreting and trying to understand the form of the problem in its natural environment (Klenke, 2016).

The term of phenomenology, which we find in sociology, psychology, philosophy, research paradigm and social sciences, common to all these approaches, shows how people make sense of their experiences (Patton, 2014). The phenomenology design, which is also explained as the study of human experiences, sought for an answer to the question of “What is reality?” and formed its foundation on individual experiences (Göçer, 2013). The main goal of phenomenological studies is to reveal what is in one’s mind, in other words, the essence of one’s perception of lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Metaphors convey information, filter reality and simply define it (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

### ***Participants***

The research group consists of a total of 46 athletes, 24 women and 22 men, who are licensed and mostly national athletes within the borders of Ankara central district in the 2020-2021 season. However, after removing those who did not want to participate in the study and those whose metaphors were meaningless or empty, data analysis was carried out on 38 participants. A total of 38 athletes, 20 female and 18 male, aged between 16-28 years, holding a licence in the Modern Pentathlon discipline in Ankara in 2021, participated in the study.

### ***Data Collection***

Data collection tools consist of two sections in this study. In the first section, demographic characteristics of the participants such as gender, class and age which contributed to the interpretation of the results obtained in the research were included while in the second section, the athletes were asked to complete the sentence “Pentathlon is like/similar to ..... because ....” to determine the perceptions of the athletes who were licensed in the pentathlon sport and participated

in the research. They were requested to use the term “because” to describe the metaphor they formed in a logical manner. Athletes were given enough time to complete the sentence and necessary permissions were obtained from their managers and trainers. Special care was taken not to use any guiding expressions during explaining what they should do to the athletes participating in the research.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data was evaluated using the content analysis technique in this study. Content analysis is the process of coding and quantization (digitization) what people say and write according to clear instructions (Patton, 1990). First, the metaphors obtained for the data analysis were coded numerically from 1 to 38. Then, the numbered metaphors were reviewed one at a time, and coding was done by considering the explanations about the pentathlon. During the coding process, a code list was created based on the meanings of the metaphors. Hence, by analyzing the relationship between these codes, it was intended to make the data meaningful by reaching the categories that could best explain the feature.

In order to ensure validity and reliability, methods were used to conduct the study impartially without being affected by the personal opinions of the researchers (Baltacı, 2018) and to consult experts on the interpretations of the data and analyzes (Ekiz, 2009).

Furthermore, the themes developed by two experts from the outside of the research and the researcher who conducted the research were compared, and the numbers of consensus and disagreement were determined in the comparisons, and the research’s reliability was calculated using the Miles and Huberman’s (1994) formula ( $\text{Reliability} = \text{Consensus} / \text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement}$ ). A desired level of reliability in qualitative studies is achieved when the consistency between expert and researcher evaluations is 90% or higher (Saban, 2008). The percentages of consistency of the metaphors were found to be grouped under the same theme at a rate of 97. Another reliability method was the direct quotations of the athletes’ expressions to explain the metaphors.

### **Results**

After the analysis process, metaphors were sorted into meaningful themes based on their similarities and differences and turned into tables. The metaphors formed by the athletes for the concept of pentathlon were analyzed under certain codes and themes in accordance with their common features, and numerical data about them was given. Several examples of metaphors are also provided.

Table 1 demonstrates the metaphors of the athletes participating in the research towards the concept of “pentathlon”).

Table 1. The characteristics of the metaphors produced by modern pentathlon athletes for the concept of modern pentathlon, attributed to the source, and the distribution according to categories

| Conceptual themes      | Codes   |
|------------------------|---|
| Achievement            | Digital games, life, tree, marathon, war, sport, dancing on ice, delicious food       |
| Importance/requirement | Technology, war, shooting, running, a long road, life                                 |
| Feeling                | Daisy, movie, tunnel, game  |
| Balance                | Olympic rings, standing on one foot, being in balance, breath, living, sky, human, ax |
| Struggle               | War, chess, ant, army, food   |

When Table 1 was examined, it was found that there were the same codes under some themes. As the metaphors in these codes had diverse meanings, they were placed in different themes. For instance, athlete 34’s “delicious food” metaphor with the explanation of “Modern pentathlon is like/similar to a delicious food because, if you do not do this sport no more after doing it for many years, you will eventually feel like you cannot live anymore; and it is like a part of your body, it almost fills your stomach and helps you to enjoy life.” was included in the “Being an Element of Acquisition”. Since athlete 1 used the metaphor of “food” with the explanation of “Modern pentathlon is like/similar to food, if the food is lacking salt and spices, it will not taste good, and similarly if you lack a feature that you must have in modern pentathlon, you cannot be successful.”, the code was placed in the theme of “being a balance element”.

When the metaphors of the athletes were examined, they were categorized as “Element of Balance” (f=10, 26,3%), “Element of Struggle” (f=9, 23,6%), “Element of Acquisition” (f=7, 18,4%), “Element of Importance and Necessity” (f=7, 18,4%) and “Element of Emotion” (f=5, 13%).

### ***Modern pentathlon as an element of balance***

“Balance” is conceptually defined as mental and emotional harmony and stability (TDK, 2021). Athletes may consider their sport as a job at times. They have a variety of roles outside of work/sports life. They have personal space needs that they want to maintain both on their own or with their spouses and friends. Aside from the individual benefits, doing sports can help individuals enhance their self-confidence and better understand the meaning of life by balancing work and daily life, which affects the individual psychologically and sociologically (Roy, 2016). It is mentioned that human life does not only consist of business life, but also private life;

moreover, there are responsibilities and roles individuals are obliged to fulfil in their private life as well as their business life. The effort required to fulfil all of these roles at the same time causes stress which is both physically and mentally challenging (Genç et al., 2016).

When the metaphors in the modern pentathlon as an Element of Balance category were analyzed; it was seen that the concept of the modern pentathlon was explained with expressions such as problem solver, organizer, mentor and guide. In this category, for the concept of modern pentathlon, 10 athletes (26,3%) used the metaphors of axe, human, maintaining balance, breathe, life, sky, Olympic rings, balancing on one leg and food. The following are some metaphors created by modern pentathlon athletes:

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to standing on a seesaw with one leg while carrying an egg at the same time because school is on one hand and family is on the other. They all expect you to spend time with them while still being successful.” (Athlete 22)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to human because just like a person who has basic needs such as shelter, food and sleep, the modern pentathlon also has many needs. If these needs are provided, the person will be healthy; otherwise, she or he will deteriorate.” (Athlete 4)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to an axe because it is not enough for an axe to be sharp on its own to cut or break an object, the person who provides the axe the strength and direction is also important. And, in the modern pentathlon, no matter how sharp you are, if your trainer is not good enough, what good is it?” (Athlete 3)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to maintaining balance because in this sport which has 5 disciplines you must eat a balanced diet, exercise in a balanced manner and live in a balanced manner.” (Athlete 21)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to breathe because if you move forward in a certain systematic and if you breathe more than you exhale or do the opposite, the system will break down. Also, in modern pentathlon, you have to do 5 disciplines within a system.” (Athlete 19)*

### ***Modern pentathlon as an element of struggle***

Sport is defined as a game, competition or activity that requires physical effort and skill, which has rules and is coached (Nelson et al., 2022), is played or done according to recreational rules and/or as a job (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). Movements must be done within certain rules and a fighting spirit. Therefore, sports contain all of the deliberate, intentional actions that individuals perform within the framework of certain rules in order to struggle, compete, have fun and live a healthy life.

In this category, the modern pentathlon athletes explained the characteristics of metaphor attributed to the source with the expressions such as the basic elements of sports, the building block, key ingredient, etc. Examples of metaphors used by 9 athletes (23,6%) in this category included war, military service, ant and chess. Some examples of metaphors created by the athletes were as follows:

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to war because the nature of this sport is to struggle and survive.” (Athlete 17)*

*As sports events bring people together in common events, individuals develop a desire to compete, discipline and struggle. As a result, people can achieve success, know how to lose, express themselves, and establish good relationships by respecting other individuals (Şahan, 2008).*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to an ant because it is an alive ant that carries up to 10 times its own weight. You have to be an ant to carry 5 disciplines.” (Athlete 16)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to fighting for survival because a person must overcome every obstacle that comes her or his way in order to survive. That’s why it is similar to war.” (Athlete 5)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to chess because you always have to think about your next move. You cannot be successful if you do not plan your next move in this sport, which includes many disciplines.” (Athlete 12)*

### ***Modern pentathlon as an element of acquisition***

Aside from the physical development provided by movement and high heart rate exercise, the contribution to psychological and personal development is emphasized (Malm et al., 2019). This development is noticed by the participants and the people around them, such as parents who witness this process closely. In the researches, parents reported that their children who participated in sports experience personal, social and physical benefits since sports provide opportunities for discovering skills and developing positive self-esteem. Moreover, it was suggested that their children benefited most when coaches establish a mastery motivational atmosphere which was thought to facilitate the discovery (Neely & Holt, 2014). The situations in which the athletes explained the characteristics of the metaphors attributed to the source with the expressions such as learning, useful, suitable, leading to the proper habits, self-control, responsibility, patience, preventing evil, etc., were gathered in this category. Sport, marathon, tree, human, computer game, ice dance, and delicious food are examples of metaphors 7 athletes (18,4%) used for the concept

of modern pentathlon in this category. Some examples of metaphors formed by modern pentathletes are given below:

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to the marathon because it is a long-term process, and you have to stay strong at every stage of this process.” (Athlete 9)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to a delicious food because, if you do not do this sport no more after doing it for many years, you will eventually feel like you cannot live anymore; and it is like a part of your body, it almost fills your stomach and helps you to enjoy life.” (Athlete 34)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to ice-dancing because first, you learn to skate, then you learn to stay in balance, and then you learn to dance, and they come together to form an aesthetic choreography. Also, the modern pentathlon, which consists of 5 disciplines, comes together, and the pleasure of watching increases.” (Athlete 28)*

#### ***Modern pentathlon as an element of importance/necessity***

Ekinci (2013) identified self-confidence as a critical element in individuals living a desirable, constructive, and useful life, raising themselves according to their talents and supporting their strengths to become successful individuals. Psychological resilience is the positive psychological capacity that can be developed and enhanced to regain the old positive level and the ability to recover from failure, conflict, increased responsibility, heavy work and life burdens, many adversities, and other negativities (Luthans, 2002).

In this category, the modern pentathlon athletes defined the characteristics of metaphor attributed to the source using expressions such as indispensable, necessary, source of life, self-confidence, and psychological resilience. For example, metaphors used by 7 athletes (18,4%) in this category included a war where you are a hero, life, a long road, technology, shooting, and running. The following are some metaphors developed by the modern pentathlon athletes for this category:

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to life because in real life, when we graduate from school and get a job, our responsibilities increase, and we have a family to care for. I think that the pentathlon is similar to this since when we first step into the pentathlon, we encounter the biathlon. It is similar to starting high school for the first time; then, as we get older, we continue running, shooting, and swimming, which is like university. Then, fencing comes, and I see it as getting a job after college because one learns to beat and be defeated. Also, we learn to be patient in fencing; just like in our first job, we learn and endure. Finally, the pentathlon’s last*

*phase arrives, and riding is completed now, equal to graduating from school, finding a job, and getting married. If we do not do these things like life, the nest will fall apart.” (Athlete 7)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to technology because it constantly evolves and changes. If you cannot keep up with this progress, you will lose.” (Athlete 13)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to shooting because like in shooting there are five lights in the modern pentathlon, you have to turn all of these lights green, and if you cannot turn even one of them green, you cannot go on your path.” (Athlete 23)*

### ***Modern pentathlon as an element of emotion***

Emotions are diverse, weak or strong, negative or positive, general or specific, short or long term, primary (initial emotional response) or secondary (triggered by an emotional response) (Werner & Gross, 2010). Emotions not only provide meaning to experiences but also give meaning to life by arranging oneself and other people or events with which she or he interacts (Greenberg, 2004).

In this category, athletes explained the concept of modern pentathlon with expressions such as love, fun, happiness, sadness, pessimism, etc. Tunnel, game, daisy, and movie can be given as examples of the metaphors created by 5 athletes (13%) in this category. The following are some metaphors used by modern pentathletes:

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to a tunnel because you walk on a dark road hoping to see the light at the end of it.” (Athlete 24)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to a game because it is entertaining and fun.”  
(Athlete 14)*

*“Modern pentathlon is like/similar to a movie because this movie contains beautiful, tragic, sad, and funny memories. It usually has a happy ending but can also have a sad one. You experience these emotions in the modern pentathlon, as well.” (Athlete 31)*

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Metaphors, which are used by researchers and educators for a variety of purposes, are applied in this study to determine the feelings and thoughts of the athletes who are licensed and interested in modern pentathlon sport towards the concept of the modern pentathlon. Also, various recommendations for further researches have been developed based on the results of this research.

When the metaphors of the athletes who took part in the research for the concept of modern pentathlon were analyzed, it was observed that the athletes mainly stated metaphors related to the theme of balance and struggle. López de Subijana et al. (2015) indicated in their study that athletes

devote serious time to their sports careers due to situations such as training, competitions, travel, and job requirements. It was highlighted that the need for a balanced relationship with external demands such as academic, social, or family, especially for athletes planning dual careers, can be supported by specific strategies such as determining their priorities and arranging their programs. Therefore, it is suggested that the significance of time management in multiple disciplines, such as modern pentathlon, and the studies to be conducted in collaboration with a sports psychologist may be beneficial. For instance, the metaphor of athlete 22, who led experts to assume that s/he currently sees and does the modern pentathlon as a job, can be suggested that s/he has difficulty in allocating time to her or his social life and keeping her or his life in balance and that the athlete expects to establish a balance in her or his processes.

When the metaphors on the theme of being an element of emotion are analyzed, for the athletes' training and competitions, it was seen that although the athletes added meanings with good emotions and they had much fun in these sports, they also expressed the situations in which they struggled and got extremely tired. Through the explanations of the metaphors, it was realized that the athletes have fun while doing the modern pentathlon sport, that they love this discipline, and that they mentioned the benefits of the sport and the fact that doing this sport brings up many emotions. Although entertainment is a result of sports, children who find sports fun have higher participation rates (Jonsson et al., 2017; Palmer-Keenan & Bair, 2019). Similarly, having friends in a sports program has been described as a reason to continue participating in a sport and a reason to participate (Jonsson et al., 2017; Kimiecik, 2018).

Sports are crucial for psychological and social development as well as physical development. Healing, accepted as a multidimensional concept, can be achieved adequately when physical, cognitive, and affective resources are renewed (Balk et al., 2017; Kellmann, 2002). It is known that participation in sports has numerous benefits for individuals, such as creating healthy habits, self-discipline, social skills, teamwork, mental health, and sportsmanship (SickKids Staff, 2021). A systematic review examined the development of life skills of socially vulnerable youth through school sports activities and found a positive relationship between participation in sports and life skills (Hermens et al., 2017).

Under their metaphorical study to identify the perceptions of gifted students towards the concept of sports, Pekel et al. (2019) found that, in the theme of emotional element of students, sports were a part of their everyday life and doing sports made them feel comfortable, happy and free, which is parallel with the results of our research. According to a similar study, students' metaphorical perceptions of the concept of volleyball generally focused on positive attributes (Pekel et al., 2023).

While the athletes' metaphors characterized the modern pentathlon as a tool that allows them to have a fun and enjoyable time, they also added themes of rivalry, winning, losing, and competition into the metaphors. Yılmaz and Güven (2015) concluded that elements such as "winning, losing, struggling and competition" were found in their study analyzing gifted students' perceptions on the concept of physical education and physical education teacher. In this present study, even though it was found that the athletes perceived modern pentathlon as a field that supports their physical, social, and emotional development and where positive interactions occur, it may be said that there were also expressions that could be identified as future anxiety, worry, and sadness. In light of the metaphors the athletes used, it is thought that emotion regulation is important for modern pentathlon athletes.

Self-regulation skills play an essential role in reaching the goal of many athletes on the way to the Olympic medal (Elbe & Wikman, 2017). Self-regulation is the thoughts, feelings, and actions that the person plans and constructs to achieve personal goals (Zimmerman, 2000). Self-regulation is important in increasing the welfare level and performance of athletes (Balk & Englert, 2020). Suppose a certain balance is not found between the adequate rest and recovery conditions of the athletes for their disciplines and the requirements of the disciplines. In that case, some negative situations such as athlete burnout (Gustafsson et al., 2008) and decreased performance occur (Halsen & Jeukendrup, 2004).

For instance, in this study, the tunnel metaphor of athlete 24 evoked a life that goes through a complicated process that oscillates between hope and hopelessness. Conducting such studies on emotion regulation by receiving psychological support in the sports careers of athletes who reflect such emotions might help the athlete.

When taken as a whole, it can be thought that the athletes generally have a positive perspective on the modern pentathlon sport; however, they are concerned about the future because of the reasons such as the difficulty of the discipline, the lack of training conditions, or the negative perception of the coach-athlete relationship. Although it was found in a similar study that the concept of sport was mostly perceived positively, the fact that there were also negative perceptions shows parallelism with our research (Pekel, 2023; Satman & Pekel 2023).

In the theme of being an element of acquisition, the athletes indicated that they experienced physical development thanks to the modern pentathlon, that they relaxed mentally, and that they gained positive knowledge and life-related gains through the sport. Athlete 34 stated in her or his metaphor that "Modern pentathlon is like/similar to a delicious food because, if you do not do this sport no more after doing it for many years, you will eventually feel like you cannot live anymore;

and it is like a part of your body, it almost fills your stomach and helps you to enjoy life.” (Athlete 34)

When the metaphors in the theme of being an element of acquisition were examined, it was noticed that the athletes emphasized staying strong, enjoying life, and having a high level of viewing pleasure. Sports provide a good context for fostering and enhancing life skills as well as a suitable environment for increasing positive youth development. Acquired skills, values, and virtues that help athletes during adolescence and promote their development throughout life can also support positive youth development in sports (Jones & Lavalley, 2009). In addition, self-regulation is based on the well-being and performance of athletes to demonstrate high-level performance in sports.

Lower somatic and cognitive anxiety (Nicholls et al., 2010) is linked to better competitive preparation (Pilgrim et al., 2018), endurance performance (McCormick et al., 2019; Wagstaff, 2014), decision-making (Furley et al., 2013), and motor learning, as well as self-regulation (Kolovelonis et al., 2012; Kurt and İlhan 2021). In their study with 46 gifted students, Yılmaz and Güven (2015) presented the positive effect of sports on students’ personalities, giving the students’ drawings as examples. According to another study, judo offers a sense of freedom, develops the philosophy of life, teaches sometimes to win and sometimes to lose, teaches to survive, brings excitement to life, collects experiences, gives peace, and promotes collaboration and unity. This information parallels the metaphors made in this study (Demiral & Demir, 2018).

The lack of metaphor studies in the field of modern pentathlon increases the importance of this study. It can be stated that the presentation of sports disciplines in visual communication instruments such as television and social media may be a factor in the spread of thought and interest in modern pentathlon and similar sports disciplines, which have a significant historical background but are not at the desired level considering the number of licensed athletes in our country.

The following recommendations might be made as a result of the research findings:

- Recognizing the significance of sports to all individuals in supporting modern pentathlon athletes in Turkey, it is thought that it will contribute to trainers and federations to work to allow athletes to reach their full potential and identify what athletes expect from the discipline.
- The perceptions of athletes who engage in modern pentathlon sports only in the province of Ankara towards modern pentathlon concepts were investigated in this study. The expectations and differences may be revealed by applying it to the athletes from different regions and at younger ages.

- It can be advised that since athletes cannot train with quality or the discipline is too expensive, modern pentathlon trainings must be conducted in such a way that they meet the interests and expectations of the athletes, and that care should be given to ensure that they continue the sport.
- Furthermore, it is thought that the data obtained in this study will contribute to the literature as a source for experts and technical people to use in the promotion of modern pentathlon, the production and execution of social projects in society, and the development of short and long-term micro/macro planning and strategies by federations.

#### **Information on Ethics Committee Permission Committee**

Name: Ethics Committee of Gazi University

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#### **Researchers' Contribution Statement**

Within the scope of the study, the authors have equal contributions

#### **Conflict of Interest**

There is no personal or financial conflict of interest within the scope of the study

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