

Happiness in Volleyball: Turkish Sultans League Sample

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Abstract. *Study Objectives:* Happiness is an important emotion for the careers and performances of athletes. For this reason, the research aimed to measure the happiness perceptions of the female athletes playing in the Turkish Sultans Volleyball League. *Methods:* In accordance with this purpose, interviews were conducted with 18 Turkish volleyball players by using the criterion sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods. A questionnaire that involved a personal information form and a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers was used as the data collection tool. In the analysis of qualitative data, descriptive analysis techniques were utilized. *Results:* The interview form contained a single question that investigated three things giving happiness to volleyball. This question was supported by the question of “why”. When the data was analyzed, it was determined that the main themes that affected the happiness perceptions of the volleyball players were sociological, psychological, economic, and physiological reasons. *Conclusion:* In conclusion, for Turkish female volleyball players playing in the Turkish Sultans League, happiness is; doing the sport they love in the team they feel belonged to, building a career through quality training thanks to adequate club facilities, working with qualified coaches who are fair, winning matches, and earning money by playing in accordance with their goals, and thus improving their self-confidence, and being physically, and mentally healthy.

Key words: Volleyball, Volleyball Player, Sports Life, Happiness

Introduction

Volleyball was invented in 1895 by William G. Morgan (1870-1942), who was an administrator of physical education in Holyoke City, Massachusetts, the United States of America (1). Later on, together with the establishment of the federations in many other countries all around the world, volleyball started to become widespread. While volleyball was spreading rapidly, it became a sport that was associated with women rather than men. Thus, women’s volleyball started to become more popular than men’s volleyball (2). Volleyball is not a sport open to violence because it is played in separate areas, and does not allow athletes to resort to violence even in the highest tension, and most aggressive situations. In this respect, volleyball is a game worthy of civilized human societies that are based on respect (3).

Volleyball is a game with a high level of excitement that requires solid teamwork, and practice in order to achieve individual goals. Unlike many team sports, volleyball players are placed in different positions on the court. For this reason, all players must be ready to play various roles within the team (4). This practice can be achieved by teaching the fundamentals of all the positions in the reserve teams.

Being a qualified volleyball player means learning, and gaining the necessary skills of volleyball because the best volleyball players are the ones who know the game best. A volleyball player whose skills are not well-developed, and who continues to prevent the team from playing well can be immediately, and easily noticed (5). We can divide these skills into four main categories: technical skills, tactical skills, form, and mental skills.

Mentally, it is relatively easy to acknowledge that the worldviews of others are as valid and valuable as the worldview of our own. Nonetheless, it can be sentimentally difficult to accept the values, beliefs, and concepts of the worldviews that are different from our worldview (6). One of these difficult concepts can be regarded as the concept of “happiness”.

The psychology of happiness tries to answer some of the fundamental questions that philosophers, theologians, and politicians have been chasing for years. The first set of questions is about the definition of happiness, and its criterion. The second is about why some people are happy or unhappy. And the third is about what a person should or should not do to increase happiness (7). It is possible to respond to the first question as follows: Every individual wants to be happy, but for the individual to be happy, they must first know what happiness is. The happiness of an ordinary person is as simple as his/her life, and happiness is being able to know not to suffer. Furthermore, the fundamental components that form happiness are the essential situations such as health, nutrition, and freedom (8). For example, Zhang and Chen (2019) expressed that doing exercise even once a week made a difference in the level of happiness (9). Furthermore, some researchers emphasized that moderate level or extreme physical activity at least once a week was positively associated with happiness among adolescents (10-11).

We can respond to the second question about why some people are happy or unhappy with a quote from Epictetus. According to Epictetus, who one of the most prominent figures in Stoicism, happiness, and freedom begin with a clear, and distinct acknowledgement of the following basic principle: We can control some of the things, but we cannot control some others. For this reason, individuals are only able to achieve intrinsic calmness, and extrinsic effectivity after learning what s(he) can control, and what s(he) cannot control (12).

There are various responses to the third question in terms of increasing happiness. One of them is that individuals must develop a philosophy of life to reduce their emotional distress, and be happier in their lives. Developing a philosophy of life leads to a profound change that influences many behaviors of an individual (13). If the individual can denominate his/her

emotions, s(he) might have won half the fight in terms of developing a philosophy of life. Even knowing what you're dealing with can sometimes lead to a real solution (14). Jin et al. (2017) reported that Chinese athletes stated seeking a different success by using time well, and achieving individual daily practice goals was important in perceiving happiness (15).

Professional sports can force sports people about emotions, thoughts, and behavior. One of these sports people is athletes. It is especially significant for athletes to be emotionally strong in order to be able to cope with various difficulties. Due to this significance, the researches on how emotions are perceived by the athletes, and especially by female athletes, is thought to be useful. At this point, it becomes important to investigate what the feeling of happiness, which is one of the fundamental emotions, means for female athletes. Therefore, the happiness of the professional female volleyball players in volleyball has remarkable importance both individually, and on a team basis.

Materials and Methods

Participants

18 Turkish volleyball players playing in the Turkish Sultans League in the 2020-2021 season participated in this study. The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 33. In terms of the number of participants, the numbers of undergraduate students, and undergraduates were balanced. The professional volleyball experience of the participants ranged from two to sixteen years. The findings regarding the demographic characteristics of the athletes were presented in Table 1.

Design

The study group of the research was selected with the criterion sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods. And the study group of the research was composed of 18 athletes playing in the clubs of the Turkish Sultans League. Purposive sampling method involves the identification, and selection of the individuals or groups who are knowledgeable and experienced in terms of the subject of interest (16).

Table 1. The demographic characteristics of the volleyball players

	N	%
National Team		
A National	4	22.2
Young National	6	33.3
Junior National	3	16.7
Non National	5	27.8
Total	18	100
Age		
19-23	5	27.8
24-28	8	44.4
29-33	5	27.8
Total	18	100
Position		
Setter	3	16.7
Libero	3	16.7
Middle player	6	33.3
Hitter	6	33.3
Total	18	100
Education Status		
Graduate	9	50
Undergraduate	9	50
Total	18	100
Experience		
2-5	4	22.2
6-10	9	50
11-16	5	27.8
Total	18	100
Marital Status		
Single	13	72.2
Married	5	27.8
Total	18	100

Data Collection

The interview form used as the data collection tool in the research was formed of two sections.

In the first section, the demographic information including the state of wearing national team jersey, age, position, educational status, years of experience, and marital status was included. In the second section, a semi-structured interview form with a single question asking the three things that made the athletes happy

in volleyball was utilized. Semi-structured interviews are frequently preferred by researchers because they can eliminate the limitations of the tests, and questionnaires based on writing, and filling in, and that they help to acquire in-depth information on a specific subject because they have a certain level of standardization, and flexibility (17). Because of the pandemic, the interviews with the athletes were carried out via telephone within the scope of health measures. Before starting the interview, the participants were given information about the topic of the research. The participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded. The athletes who were willing to participate voluntarily were included in the study.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis method was used in the analysis of the research data (17). The codes, and themes were created from all the data obtained. The interviews were recorded, and all the participants were coded with the letter "S" to be able to preserve their privacy. The number revealed the order of the participant that was interviewed. Each participant was coded with the abbreviation "S1, S2...". The processes of coding the data obtained in the research, finding out the themes, organizing the codes and themes, identifying, and interpreting the findings were performed by means of systematic and gradual analyses (18).

Results

When the views of the volleyball players about happiness were evaluated, it could be seen that they presented reasons based on the sociological, psychological, and economic dimensions.

The reasons that make athletes happy sociologically could be divided into three groups. These were coded as teamwork, the quality of training, building a career. The theme of those who regarded teamwork as a reason for happiness was respect because volleyball is a team sport, and success is achieved by team spirit.

The views of the volleyball players who emphasized the theme of "respect" are as follows:

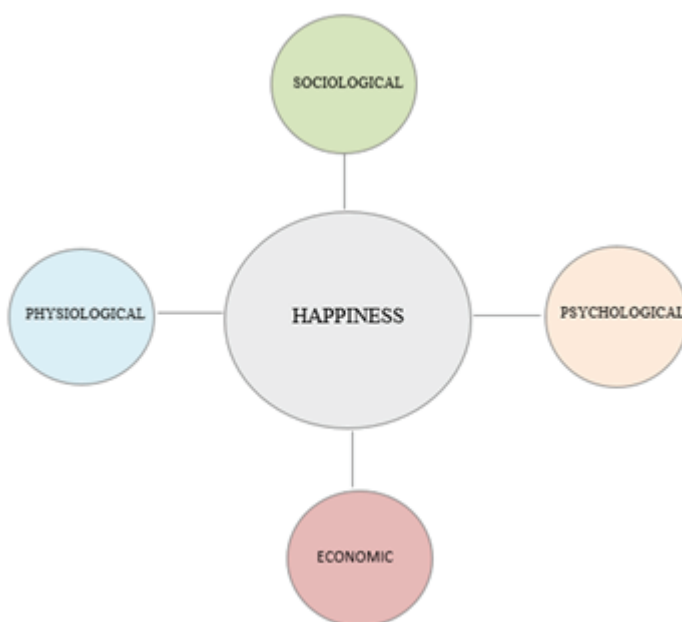


Figure 1. The main themes regarding the happiness reasons of the volleyball players

Table 2. Positive views of the athletes regarding the sociological dimension

The codes obtained as a result of the interviews	Sub-themes	Athletes
Teamwork	Respect	A1-A2-A3-A8-A9-A13-A17-A18
The quality of training	Working Together	A2-A9-A14-A16-A18
Building a Career	Fame	A5-A6-A16

A1: “The respect I will show to my work, and my teammates, and the respect I will receive from them is necessary for me to be happy.”

A2: “The friendship, unity, and solidarity within the team make me happy. Because in such an environment, everyone is respectful to each other.”

A3: “I feel happy when I find a respectful harmony with my teammates.”

A8: “Having good friends within the team that I respect makes me happy. Because we can communicate better with such people.”

A9: “I always care about respect, and courtesy. People with these qualities make me happy. I stay away from disrespectful, and malicious people because I will be hurt by them, and I will be unhappy.”

A13: “Respectful environments in volleyball make me happy. Because such environments are created by quality people. There is team success where there are qualified people.”

A17: “I play more comfortably in the team when I, and my athletic identity is respected. And, this makes me happy.”

A18: “Everyone in the team should, first of all, respect each other. Then comes love. These are necessary for the athletes to get along with each other. I become happy in such teams.”

The theme of the athletes who regarded the quality of training as a reason for happiness was “working together”, and the views of the volleyball players are as follows.

A2: "When I train as a team, I am happy. Because the competition on the court increases my performance."

A9: "I would be very happy if I gave the credit for the training that day. Training is the place to learn, and I want to do the training efficiently."

A14: "It makes me happy when my teammates work well in the training. Because, if the quality of the training is good, the match will go well, too."

A16: "I feel happy when my teammates, and I perform well in the training. Because, when the training goes well, a fun, and positive atmosphere is created."

A18: "I am happy when I train well, and efficiently because my teammates also contribute to me for training well."

The theme of the athletes who regarded career as a reason for happiness was "fame".

A5: "We are living in an era where social status is very important. Being a famous athlete by building a career makes me happy."

A6: "Being an athlete with a career brings fame. You become popular. This makes me happy, and increases my self-confidence."

A16: "Being able to continue my career successfully makes me happy. Because, when you have a good career, you are more well-known, and recognized."

The views of the athletes regarding the psychological dimension that they indicated as the reason for happiness were collected under six sub-themes. Of these, the most commonly expressed was "playing for a goal".

The statements of the athletes who emphasized this theme are as follows:

A1: "Playing for my goals makes me happy. Because this situation allows me to achieve success."

A4: "I feel happy when I work in a planned, and disciplined manner and prepare to achieve my goals. When I

do this, I feel that I prevent most of the negativity that can be experienced."

A7: "The athletes, and teams with goals are more open to improvement when compared to those who do not. Therefore, playing for my goals makes me happy."

A10: "Fighting for a goal makes me very happy. I cannot play volleyball with no aim or goal."

A12: "I feel happy to train to achieve my goals, and play matches accordingly."

A15: "It would make me happy to achieve all my goals during the season and at the end of the season."

The athletes who stated that playing volleyball in a self-confident manner made them happy revealed the theme of "self-confidence". The views of these athletes are as follows:

A1: "It is indispensable for an athlete, and I think the main factor that brings success is self-confidence. When my self-confidence is high, I play more effectively, and my performance is good. It makes me happy, too."

A4: "Believing what you can do is more important than working because having self-confidence brings success, and success brings happiness."

A13: "I play more comfortably when I trust in myself. And playing comfortably makes me very happy."

A15: "I feel really happy to do training, and play games in a self-confident manner. I have to be confident in order to play steadily, and without stress."

The athletes who stated that it is required to love volleyball in order to be happy in volleyball revealed the theme of "love". The views of these athletes are as follows:

A3: "I love volleyball. Not only because I play volleyball, but also because I am exploring new countries, and cities through volleyball. It makes me really happy."

A4: "I love playing volleyball. I feel happy when I play with love. This love increases especially when I am successful."

Table 3. Positive views of the athletes regarding the psychological dimension

The codes obtained as a result of the interviews	Sub-themes	Athletes
Having Self-confidence	Self-confidence	A1-A4-A13-A15
Playing for a Goal	Goal	A1-A4-A7-A10-A12-A15
Loving Volleyball	Love	A3-A4-A9-
Being Peaceful	Peace	A5-A6-A14
The Desire to Win the Match	Motivation	A7-A11-A16-A17
The Quality of the Coach	Justice	A7-A8-A10-A12

A9: "I started playing volleyball because I love it, and I will continue to play as long as I have this love. I feel lucky, and happy to do what I love."

The athletes who stated that it is required to be peaceful in order to be happy in volleyball revealed the theme of "peace". The views of these athletes are as follows:

A5: "When there is peace in the team, I also feel peaceful. I think that peace is also the basis of success. Peace brings happiness."

A6: "Being peaceful is essential to be happy in volleyball. Because, if we are peaceful both individually, and within the team, we will achieve greater success. This makes everyone and me really happy."

A14: "When my mind, and heart are at peace, it is easier to reflect my potential on the court. Being in such a situation makes me very happy."

Athletes who attribute happiness to the desire to win a match revealed the theme of "motivation". The views of these athletes are as follows:

A7: "The fact that my desire to win a match is vivid and high makes me happy. Because, thanks to this desire, I maintain, and develop my motivation."

A11: "One of the factors that motivate me is my desire to win a match. Because, as I win a match, I feel happy, and all of our efforts are about winning the matches."

A16: "When I win, I feel happy. Wins increase my motivation. That's why, I'm full of the desire to win before every game."

A17: "I feel happy when I win a match, and my motivation increases. For this reason, I make great effort to keep my performance as high as possible depending on the desire to win a match."

Athletes who emphasized the quality of the coach in order to be happy in volleyball revealed the theme of "justice". The views of these athletes are as follows:

A7: "It makes me happy to work in the environments where nobody is entrenched upon, and where every individual is equal. It is the justice of the coach that will provide this environment. In my opinion, quality coaches are those who are fair."

A8: "If you are working with a coach who approaches supportively, and positively, and who is fair, you are lucky and happy. The coaches with these qualities are qualified, and elite ones."

A10: "As an athlete who believes in development at all ages, working with qualified coach makes me happy. As far as I am concerned, the basic criterion of a quality coach is to be fair."

A12: "Working with qualified coaches has always made me happy. A qualified coach is open to development, and criticism. The main characteristic of such a coach is being fair, and behaving just towards the players."

As one of the reasons for happiness in volleyball, the athletes put forward the economic situation. They evaluated the economic dimension both individually, and in terms of the club. They also expressed that earning money individually, and the facilities offered to them depending on the economic situation of the club in terms of the club were the reasons for happiness.

The views of the athletes who emphasized "earning money" as the reason for happiness are as follows:

A5: "Earning as much money as possible makes me happy since a sports career as a volleyball player ends at a very early age compared to other professions. Thus, we will have saved enough money to live more comfortably for the rest of our lives."

A6: "Earning money for the work we do motivates me. Therefore, I am happy both on, and off the court."

A8: "As a result, we do volleyball as a profession. We need to earn money. I feel happy since a good salary paid regularly affects my motivation positively."

A10: "Earning the money I deserve in return for my hard work, and labor makes me happy."

A11: "One of my reasons to play volleyball is to earn money. Therefore, I am happy when I earn money."

A12: "When I play volleyball, I work hard both physically, and mentally. If I earn the money I want in return for my efforts, I feel happy."

The views of the athletes who emphasized "club facilities" as the reason for happiness are as follows:

Table 4. Positive views of the athletes regarding the economic dimension

The codes obtained as a result of the interviews	Sub-themes	Athletes
Earning Money	Money	A5-A6-A8-A10-A11-A12
Club Facilities	Facilities	A2-A3-A13

A2: "If the facilities offered to us by the club such as the place we stay in, the court in which we play the game, the city where the club is located, the food we eat are good, then this will make me happy."

A3: "The better and the more qualified the facilities offered by the club are, from the place we stay in, the court we play, the jerseys we wear, the equipment we use, the happier, and the more joyful I am."

A13: "The facilities offered by the club should be able to provide our comfort. Because, when I'm comfortable, I can focus better on my work."

The statements of the athletes regarding the "health sub-theme are as follows:

A11: "I have to be mentally healthy as well as being physically healthy because only by this way, I can do sports professionally. I feel happy when I am physically, and mentally healthy."

A14: "The healthier a person is, the happier he or she feels. And, when I am in good health, I feel happy. When I'm happy, I play better volleyball."

A15: "Being uninjured, and healthy makes me happy because by this way, I perform my job well."

A17: "As long as I am healthy, I can do my job. That's why, being healthy makes me happy."

A18: "I feel happy when there is no physical pain in my body, and when I am mentally relaxed because by this way, I perform better."

When these views of the athletes were evaluated, it could be seen that being physiologically healthy made them happy because they link being healthy directly to performance. Since volleyball is a kind of a sport that requires being physically, and mentally strong, it can be deemed important for volleyball players to think that way in terms of happiness.

Discussion

This study was designed in order to determine the types of situations or events that contributed to the

happiness experienced by a group of volleyball players in the Turkish Sultans League. The findings provide detailed information regarding the views of the 18 athletes who participated in this study about happiness. Further quantitative research is needed to provide a more accurate understanding of the extent to which these views about happiness apply to all registered players. Another limitation of this study is that all the data was collected in the 2020-2021 season. Despite these limitations, the findings revealed a wide variety of notions of happiness peculiar to the players in the Turkish Sultans League. The items that stood out in the happiness perceptions of many participants were; teamwork, setting goals, earning money, being physically, and mentally healthy. According to the findings of the research, the reasons for the happiness of the athletes in volleyball were divided into 4 categories as sociological, psychological, economic, and physiological reasons.

Those who put forward sociological reasons revealed the themes of teamwork, the quality of the training, and building a career. The main reason for people to get together and form communities is the trust, and respect that the community gives. Especially in the early ages of humanity, human beings, who were extremely weak and vulnerable towards nature and other people, found the first solution to the insecurity caused by their loneliness in crowding and reproducing by coming together. This reproduction has brought two new concepts into human life; division of labor, and cooperation (19). Therefore, the athletes who play in a volleyball team with an understanding of division of labor, and cooperation primarily wish to feel teamwork. Otherwise, the athletes devote their energy, and attention to observing what is going on around them, and protecting themselves from threats. However, those who feel secure devote their energy, and attention to career development, and performance. This situation increases the quality of the training.

Table 5. The reasons of the athletes in terms of physiological dimension

The codes obtained as a result of the interviews	Sub-themes	Athletes
Physical and Mental Health	Physical Mental	A11-A18
Being Healthy	Health	A14-A15-A17

Since teamwork awareness will increase the sense of belonging, athletes will be not only successful, but also happy, and peaceful. On the other hand, the fact that the people who do not trust each other are in the same environment, and breathe the same air with others is harmful to a team.

Those who put forward psychological reasons revealed the themes of loving volleyball, the quality of the coach, being peaceful, winning a match, goal, and self-confidence. All these themes emphasize the importance of psychological needs. A study conducted revealed that meeting basic psychological needs was associated with psychological well-being within the context of volleyball (20). In another study, the researchers examining the perception of sports happiness among elite swimming athletes found that the athletes perceived their happiness as something that varied depending on the results of the match. In the same study, half of the Korean, and Chinese athletes expressed that establishing a good relationship with the coaches, and other athletes was related to happiness (15). Hallmann et al. (2013) revealed that German athletes feel proud, and happy when they succeed in important events. National pride, and happiness were significantly explained by interest in elite sports, participation in sports, and socio-economic variables (21).

Those who put forward economic reasons revealed the themes of earning money, and club facilities. According to a study, it was revealed that the satisfaction of the beach volleyball national team players with their financial income played an important role in predicting the happiness of these athletes. In other words, increasing the satisfaction of the beach volleyball national team players with their financial income could increase the happiness of the athletes (22). In another study, it was stated that the correlation between happiness, and financial income in Korean athletes was about 30%, whereas Chinese athletes perceived all their income was as a natural reward of their hard work, and success, and Japanese athletes were satisfied with financial things, and regarded it as a part of their achievements (15). In another study, Hrcek, and Baglas (2018) also pointed out that paying attention to financial issues in clubs can have positive behavioral effects on athletes (23).

Those who put forward physiological reasons revealed the themes of being physically healthy, and being mentally healthy. Dopamine is a hormone associated with happiness, and serotonin regulates our mood (24). According to a study conducted on volleyball players, the positive relationship between happiness level, and serotonin was confirmed by the significant correlation between them (25). Because those who are physically and mentally healthy are those who feel happy. Since they feel happy, their serotonin levels are high.

In conclusion, for Turkish female volleyball players playing in the Turkish Sultans League, happiness is; doing the sport they love in the team they feel belonged to, building a career through quality training thanks to adequate club facilities, working with qualified coaches who are fair, winning matches, and earning money by playing in accordance with their goals, and thus improving their self-confidence, and being physically, and mentally healthy.

This research is the first happiness research on women's volleyball in Turkey. With this feature, it can be thought that it will contribute to the literature, be a pioneer for further comprehensive studies to be conducted on similar subjects, and contain enlightening information for those who are involved in volleyball. Besides, it is predicted that this research will be an example, and a threshold for future studies that will involve the other leagues in women's volleyball in Turkey.

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