


APPROACHES TO BOXING TRAINING AND COMPETITION USING HUMOR: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

ABORDAGENS DO USO DO HUMOR EM TREINAMENTOS E COMPETIÇÕES DE BOXE: UMA PERSPECTIVA PSICOLÓGICA

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ASPECTOS DEL USO DEL HUMOR EN ENTRENAMIENTOS Y COMPETICIONES DE BOXEO: UNA PERSPECTIVA PSICOLÓGICA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: It is important to try to understand the psychology of elite-level athletes. **Objectives:** The aim of this study was to determine the effect of humor on boxers from a psychological perspective. **Methods:** Thirteen elite boxers participated in the study. The study was carried out using the phenomenology approach, which is one of the qualitative research methods. As a data collection tool, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to obtain in-depth and detailed data from the participants. **Content analysis** was used to analyze the qualitative research data. **Results:** Our results showed that the humor approach in training or competition environments contributes positively to coping with stress by providing positive emotions such as happiness and joy in athletes. **Conclusions:** The effective and balanced use of humor not only provides positive emotions and socialization in boxers, but also reduces negative emotions such as depression, stress, and anxiety. **a) Study Design:** Qualitative research methods from a phenomenology approach were used in the design. **b) Clinical Relevance Statement:** This study showed that there is a need for programs related to in-depth evaluation of the psychosocial status of elite athletes. It should be emphasized that besides physical evaluations, psychological evaluation and support are important. **Level of evidence I; Therapeutic Studies- Investigating the Results of Treatment.**

Keywords: Sport psychology; Humor; Psychological identification; Qualitative research.

RESUMO

Introdução: É importante tentar compreender a psicologia dos atletas de elite. **Objetivos:** O objetivo deste estudo foi determinar os efeitos do humor em boxeadores do ponto de vista psicológico. **Métodos:** Treze boxeadores de elite participaram do estudo. O estudo foi realizado com abordagem de fenomenologia, que é um dos métodos de pesquisa qualitativa. Como meio de coleta de dados, foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas a fim de obter dados aprofundados e detalhados dos participantes. A análise de conteúdo foi usada para analisar os dados da pesquisa qualitativa. **Resultados:** Os resultados mostraram que a abordagem do humor em ambientes de treinamento ou competição, beneficia o enfrentamento do estresse ao proporcionar emoções positivas como felicidade e alegria aos atletas. **Conclusões:** O uso eficaz e equilibrado do humor não só proporciona emoções positivas e socialização aos boxeadores, mas também reduz emoções negativas como depressão, estresse e ansiedade. **a) Desenho do estudo:** Métodos de pesquisa qualitativa a partir de abordagem fenomenológica **b) Declaração de Relevância Clínica:** Este estudo mostrou que são necessários programas relacionados à avaliação aprofundada do estado psicossocial de atletas de elite. É preciso enfatizar, que além das avaliações físicas, a avaliação e o apoio psicológico são importantes. **Nível de evidência I; Estudos Terapêuticos – Investigação dos resultados do tratamento.**

Descritores: Psicologia do esporte; Humorismo; Identificação psicológica; Pesquisa qualitativa.

RESUMEN

Introducción: Es importante tratar de comprender la psicología de los deportistas de élite. **Objetivos:** El objetivo de este estudio fue determinar los efectos del humor en boxeadores desde una perspectiva psicológica. **Métodos:** Participaron en el estudio 13 boxeadores de élite. El estudio se llevó a cabo utilizando el enfoque de fenomenología, que es uno de los métodos de investigación cualitativa. Como medio de recopilación de datos, se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas con el fin de obtener datos detallados de los participantes. Se utilizó el análisis de contenido para analizar los datos de la investigación cualitativa. **Resultados:** Los resultados mostraron que abordar el humor en entornos de entrenamiento o competición contribuye positivamente al afrontamiento del estrés al proporcionar emociones positivas como felicidad y alegría en los deportistas. **Conclusiones:** El uso eficaz y equilibrado del humor, no sólo proporciona a los boxeadores emociones positivas y socialización, sino que también reduce emociones negativas como la depresión, el estrés y la ansiedad. **a) Diseño del estudio:** Métodos de investigación cualitativa desde un enfoque fenomenológico. **b) Declaración de relevancia clínica:**



Este estudio demostró que se necesitan programas relacionados con la evaluación en profundidad del estado psicossocial de los atletas de élite. Se debe enfatizar que además de las evaluaciones físicas, son importantes la evaluación y el apoyo psicológico. **Nivel de evidencia I; Estudios terapéuticos- Investigación de los resultados del tratamiento.**

Descriptores: Psicología del deporte; Humorismo, Identificación psicológica; Investigación cualitativa.

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the nature of the individual, it may be difficult to maintain the same mood and calmness all the time. This situation may cause the individual to take some actions in order to cope with stress and get rid of the troublesome process. One of these actions can be expressed as the use of humor.¹ Humor is nowadays generally used as an umbrella term for all forms of humorous or comical events, but it can also be used as the opposite of other terms such as wit, nonsense, fun, irony, satire, sarcasm or cynicism.²

Contemporary psychological research on humor states that humor is a positive and desirable personality trait that improves psychological health and well-being.³ Humor is a positive feature that increases positive experience in the individual (humor is in coping with stress, increasing social interactions, creativity and life well-being), and it is seen that various components of humor help individuals in different ways.² In addition, individuals with a high sense of humor; It is stated that they correspond to lower levels of depression, anxiety and negative emotions, and they also have a number of positive features such as optimism, self-acceptance, self-confidence and autonomy.^{4,5} It may not be correct to say that humor as a concept has a completely positive effect. When the explanation is used in a negative way, corrosiveness and injurious properties may emerge. In other words, humor should be used in a properly planned and thoughtful way, making it more effective, and humor should not be offensive or destructive, but in the appropriate dose and appropriate to the situation. Although it is not the only prerequisite for individuals to perceive and use humor, it can be said that 'having a humor archive', being able to look at people, events or nature creatively and authentically, and noticing the irony and comedy in the environment and relationships play an active role.⁶

Humor can sometimes cause positive and sometimes negative emotions. As a result, they consider mocking the other person in order to show himself superior as a behavior arising from negative emotions, while they consider laughing at the result of a joke that the individual listens to as a behavior stemming from positive emotions. Regardless of the emotional state, it is thought that the act of laughing relieves the individual psychologically.⁷

Martin et al.⁸ introduced the concept of multidimensional humor styles to explain how individuals use their sense of humor in their interpersonal relationships or in themselves. According to this model, the four basic humor styles used in daily life are; participatory humor is expressed as self-enhancing humor, offensive humor and self-destructive humor.^{9,10}

It can be said that humor not only provides positive emotions and socialization, but also reduces negative emotions such as depression, stress, and anxiety.¹¹ In addition, the physiological effects of humor, circulatory and respiratory system, relaxation in muscles, increase in endorphin production; Helps in its psychological effects, reducing stress, anxiety and increasing self-esteem; It can be said that its effects in improving interpersonal relations as a social effect, and in facilitating the learning process of humor in cognitive effect, have multidimensional value.^{12,13} Humor is an important concept that should be emphasized in an environment such as sports, where both cognitive and social processes are considered effective. In this context, it may be beneficial to know the effects of the use

of humor on the performance of the athletes in training or competition environments. Considering that martial arts generally involve fighting unarmed according to the skill level of the athlete, it can be said that boxing is a martial art that aims to punch the opponent without punching the opponent.¹⁴ In the light of this information, evaluating the role of humor in helping boxers cope with negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and anxiety in training or competitions may enable athletes to use different methods to cope with stress and anxiety. Studies show that exposure to humor material reduces state anxiety and negative affect in general, making it easier to cope with stressful events.¹⁵⁻²⁰ In this direction, the aim of this study is to determine the humor approaches of boxers from a psychological point of view.

METHODS

Study design

The study was carried out using the phenomenology approach, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Phenomenology focuses on how people make sense of experience and exploring experience as both individual and shared meaning.²¹ Phenomenology was chosen as the research design that was carried out in order for the boxers who made up the study group to better express their experiences and thoughts about humor approaches. The research is limited to 13 boxers who do sports at the elite level. One of the reasons for this was that 13 athletes who were boxing at the elite level and voluntarily participated in the research could be reached. In addition, due to the Covid-19 pandemic in the world, interviews were held online (Skype and Zoom platforms) and data were collected with this method. In line with the research method used by the researcher, the interviews were terminated because data saturation was reached in the qualitative interviews.

Participants

Participants of the study; It consists of 13 boxers between the ages of 21 and 29 (Age: $\bar{x}=23.76\pm SD=2.71$) who are elite boxing in Turkey, determined by criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposive sampling methods, which is quite frequently used in qualitative research methods. Ethical Board of Eskişehir Technical University (E-18467716-604.02.02-36451) approved the study.

Data collection

In line with the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions were conducted in order to obtain as detailed and detailed data as possible from the participants as a data collection tool. The researcher had the participants approved the voluntary participation form, which was prepared to confirm that they volunteered to participate in the research before starting the interview. At the same time, participant said that a code or nickname will be determined for each participant, that code names will be used in the research and their real identities will be kept confidential.

Data analysis

At the stage of data analysis; Content analysis was used to analyze the data. Content analysis, generally; It consists of the stages of coding

the data, finding the themes, organizing the codes and themes, defining and interpreting the findings.²² In the analysis of the data collected in the research, these stages were followed and reported in table format with frequency values.

RESULTS

In this section, the results obtained from the analyzes made as a result of the interviews with the boxers are presented in the table.

When Table 1, which includes the themes, categories and frequency values obtained from the answers given to the question, is examined, when the categories obtained from the opinions of 13 boxers participating in the research on the "Concept of Humor" theme; It is seen that it consists of the categories of Entertainment (f=131) and Positive Emotions (f=18). "What does the word humor mean to you?" The statements of some of the participants in the categories obtained in line with the opinions expressed by the participants are as follows:

- *Atakan: "They say there is no explanation for humor"*
- *Arif: "A person who can joke with me must be someone close to me"*
- *Çınar: "It is a concept that people use to have fun among each other"*

When Table 2, which includes the themes, categories and frequency values obtained from the answers given to the question, is examined, when the categories obtained from the opinions of 13 boxers participating in the research on the theme of "Participation in Humor Approach" are examined; It is seen that it consists of the categories of Togetherness (f=14) and Communication (f=46). "Do you use humor to laugh and have fun with your coach or friends? If you resort to humor, what kind of humor would you do?" The statements of some of the participants in the categories obtained in line with the opinions expressed by the participants are as follows:

- *Enes: "I don't joke with my coach, I joke with my friends, I think it is necessary to maintain a certain respect and something with the coach"*
- *Gülay: "It regulates interpersonal relations and can even lead to rapprochement"*

When Table 3, which includes the themes, categories and frequency values obtained from the answers given to the question, is examined, when we look at the category obtained from the opinions of the boxers

Table 1. "What does the word humor mean to you?" results for the question.

| Theme | Category | Code | f |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-----|
| Humor Concept | Fun | Joke | 96 |
| | | Humor | 27 |
| | | Things that make you laugh | 5 |
| | | Intelligence | 3 |
| | | | 131 |
| | Positive Emotions | Joy | 8 |
| | | Happiness | 6 |
| | | Pleasure | 4 |
| | | | 18 |
| | | Total | 149 |

Table 2. "Do you use humor to laugh and have fun with your coach or friends? If you resort to humor, what kind of humor would you do?" results for the question.

| Theme | Category | Code | f |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------|-----|
| Participation in Humor Approach | Togetherness | Sincerity | 5 |
| | | Respect | 9 |
| | | | 14 |
| | Communication | Timing | 10 |
| | | Athletes | 11° |
| | | Coach | 20 |
| | | | 46 |
| | | Total | 60 |

participating in the research on the theme of "Developing a Sense of Humor"; It is seen that it consists of the discipline (f=52) category. "Do you try to identify or solve problems using humor in training or matches? If you're working, how do you do it?" The expressions of some of the participants in the category obtained in line with the opinions expressed by the participants are as follows:

- *Arhan: "Sometimes it can be boring, those boxing conversations can be sweetened by the banter"*
- *Fethi: "boxers' jokes are usually gestures, I know, fistfights"*

When Table 4, which includes the themes, categories and frequency values obtained from the answers given to the question, is examined, when the category obtained from the opinions of 13 boxers participating in the research on the theme of "Coping with Negativity in Humor" is examined; It is seen that it consists of the category of suggestions against negative situations (f=75). "How is your sense of humor in the face of a negative emotion or situation? What would you suggest to deal with?" The expressions of some of the participants in the category obtained in line with the opinions expressed by the participants are as follows:

- *Fethi: "Shooting humor is a good way to hide your feelings, seriously"*
- *Gülay: "If he's going to be offended and I know it, I definitely won't do it because it's very wrong to humiliate people"*

The novelty of the study, it is thought that the findings obtained from this study will contribute to the formation of positive emotions and socialization in boxers with the effective and balanced use of humor to the trainers and professionals involved in the practice. In addition, it is thought that it will contribute to coping with some negative emotions such as depression, stress and anxiety that arise due to performance pressure in boxing. It can be stated that humor is important for boxers who do sports at the elite level and the trainers working with them, and it will contribute positively to the psychology of the trainer and athlete. Considering that the level of stress, anxiety and depression is high and negatively affecting the performance of the athlete, it is hoped that these findings obtained from this study on humor will be useful for trainers and professionals working in this field. It is thought that the results of this study will contribute to reducing the stress and anxiety levels of the athletes through humor, contributing to the performance development of the athletes, and providing support for their lifelong physical and psychological health.

DISCUSSION

The themes reached as a result of the analyzes made in the research, which aimed to determine the humor approaches of boxers from a

Table 3. "Do you try to identify or solve problems by using humor in training or matches? If you're working, how do you do it?" Results for the question.

| Theme | Category | Code | f |
|-----------------------------|------------|-------------------|----|
| Developing a Sense of Humor | Discipline | Stress | 5 |
| | | Motivation | 9 |
| | | Correct sentences | 11 |
| | | Environment | 27 |
| | | Total | 52 |

Table 4. "How is your sense of humor in the face of a negative emotion or situation? What would you suggest to deal with?" results for the question.

| Theme | Category | Code | f |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|----|
| Dealing with Negativity Through Humor | Advice Against Adverse Situations | Empathy | 8 |
| | | Focusing | 12 |
| | | Humor during training | 17 |
| | | Emotional state | 16 |
| | | Humiliation / Insulting | 22 |
| | | Total | 75 |

psychological point of view, are the concept of humor, participation in the humor approach, developing a sense of humor and dealing with negativities through humor.

It can be said that humor has a positive effect on individuals from the past to the present, and for this reason, the concept of humor has a positive meaning for the individual. Cann and Etzel²³ stated that humor creates positive emotions in the individual. This positive meaning positively affects the level of having fun and coping with difficulties thanks to positive emotions such as joy and happiness.²⁴ It can be said that as a result of seeing the concept of humor as a power that positively affects the lives of boxers, their skills of coping with stress have improved and they have positive features such as happiness, self-confidence and self-acceptance.

While incorporating humor into the sports environment, its positive and negative aspects should be considered.²⁵ It is emphasized that humor participation in different forms and measures in the training or competition environment should provide a relaxing and safe team environment that will positively affect the communication between both athletes and coaches.^{26,27} It is possible to say that when boxers' approaches to humor in the sports environment are carried out at the right time, with the right humor style and within the limits of respect, their communication skills are strengthened and their sense of togetherness is positively affected.

An important aspect of reducing stress in the process of participating in the humor approach is stated as joy, smile, laughter, that is, entertainment for fun. It is possible for the athletes to overcome their fears, to distribute the focus against negativity in negative situations and to move away from potential dangers by participating in humor.²⁸ As in all sports branches, a disciplined working environment is important in boxing. It can be stated

that boxers can cope with stress more effectively, experience less negative emotions, are physically and psychologically healthier, and have more positive and healthy relationships with their teammates, coaches or rivals, with a positive humor approach in training or competitions.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result, it can be said that the use of humor approach in training or competition environments contributes positively to coping with stress by providing positive emotions such as happiness and joy in athletes in this study, which aims to determine the humor approaches of boxers from a psychological point of view. In addition, it can be stated that when humor is used at the right time and with the right choice of humor, it improves communication with the coach, teammate or opponent and increases the shares. In addition to these, considering the characteristics of boxing, which is stated as a hard sport, it can be stated that negative reactions will be encountered as a result of the humiliating and offensive humor used.

This research has two special and strong aspects. First, when the sports psychology literature is examined, the studies on humor with elite boxers are limited. With this study, it will make a serious contribution to both the trainer and the athlete by evaluating the boxers' sense of humor. The second reason is that there are almost no studies using the qualitative research method, which examines elite level boxers and their humor situations. With this qualitative research, it is thought that it will bring a new perspective to people who study these issues, especially academically.

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