



A Phenomenological Research on the Role of Paradoxical Behaviors of the Team Leader in the Grateful Team Climate

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the relationship between the feeling of gratitude in team members and paradoxical leadership behavior in a sports team where a grateful team climate is experienced. For this purpose, the emotions, thoughts, and experiences of the athletes in a fencing team characterized by the phenomenon of gratitude were consulted. The "What are the paradoxical leadership behaviors that make team members feel grateful?" question constitutes the main problem of this research. In collecting research data, in addition to the grateful team climate scale, the team members' experiences within the team were accessed through structured open-ended questions, and the effects of paradoxical leadership behavior were sought in these experiences. Data was analyzed with MAXQDA 24 Analytics Pro based on the data obtained by the phenomenology pattern application, the inter-phenomenal relationships determined were evaluated in the context of the emergence of the gratitude climate and the paradoxical leader's attitudes and behaviors. According to the research findings, it has been concluded that paradoxical leadership attitudes and behaviors impact the formation of a grateful team climate. According to the research findings, it has been concluded that paradoxical leadership attitudes and behaviors have a decisive role in the formation of a grateful team climate.

Keywords: Team Climate, Grateful Team Climate, Sport Team Management, Leadership, Paradoxical Leadership

Özet

Minnettar Takım İkliminde Takım Liderinin Paradoksal Davranışlarının Rolü Üzerine Fenomenolojik Bir Araştırma

Bu araştırma minnettar takım ikliminin yaşanmakta olduğu spor takımında, takım üyelerinde oluşan minnettarlık duygusunun paradoksal liderlik davranışı ile ilişkisinin araştırılmasını amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla minnettarlık fenomeni ile karakterize edilmiş bir eskrim takımında sporcularının duygu düşünce ve deneyimlerine başvurulmuştur. "Takım üyelerinin minnettarlık hissetmelerine yol açan paradoksal liderlik davranışları nelerdir?" sorusu bu araştırmanın temel problemini oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma verilerinin toplanmasında minnettar takım iklimi ölçeğinin yanı sıra yapılandırılmış açık uçlu sorular aracılığı ile takım üyelerinin takım içi deneyimlerine ulaşılmış ve bu deneyimlerde paradoksal liderlik davranışının etkileri aranmıştır. Veriler MAXQDA 24 ANALYTICS Pro programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Fenomenoloji deseni uygulamasına uygun olarak elde edilen verilerden hareket ile tespit edilen olgular arası ilişkiler

minnettarlık ikliminin ortaya çıkışı ve paradoksal liderin tavır tutum ve davranışları bağlamında değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırma bulgularına göre minnettar takım ikliminin oluşumunda paradoksal liderlik tavır tutum ve davranışlarının belirleyici bir rolü olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Takım İklimi, Minnettar Takım İklimi, Spor Takımı Yönetimi, Liderlik, Paradoksal Liderlik

INTRODUCTION

Today's society is struggling with epidemics, climate crises, wars, and economic crises that threaten humanity on a global scale, and needs to be able to include positive emotions in its daily activities more than ever. It can be said that these conditions make research conducted in the context of positive psychology more prominent every day. The question of how to create a positive organizational climate that supports organizational effectiveness and efficiency is among the important research topics of human resources management. The answer to this question should be sought in leadership approaches that improve the quality of life of team members and support their psychological and spiritual health. However, it cannot be ignored that the positive emotions experienced by team members will depend on internal as well as environmental reasons. A person can only have satisfactory experiences to the extent that he can notice the positive events in his own life and enjoy these positive events (1). At this point, it is important to address the concept of gratitude, which emerges under the influence of internal and environmental conditions, in terms of building a desired positive team climate. Although the concept of gratitude is often confused with the concept of "being grateful", which causes discomfort in the person, gratitude is a pleasant experience, unlike gratitude, and is associated with positive emotions (2). The feeling of gratitude, as a state or emotional trait, is associated with subjective well-being. It can be easily seen that happy people are people who have a sense of gratitude in their lives. (3). As a predictor of quality of life, subjective well-being, and psychological and spiritual health, the feeling of gratitude is the key to success in both professional business life and recreational sports teams. Therefore, a climate of gratitude in the team can help team members cope with difficulties. At this point, another issue that has become as important as the concept of gratitude is the leadership style and approach that the management will display. Because benefiting from the synergistic effect of motivated human resources in an organization is only possible with the leadership competence of a manager. Team synergy is defined as the feeling of adopting common goals (4). The leader's ability to benefit from the synergistic effect of the team depends on the fact of being a team, which is the only tool he can use. The phenomenon of being a team requires effective management of the changing structure of internal and external environmental conditions by organizational flexibility within the framework of effective leadership. For this reason, it is necessary to focus on the team phenomenon and leadership behavior in the context of team management. There are two dimensions in each team: competition and cooperation (5) and the leader is the manager responsible for managing these dimensions in balance. Whether it is valid for a business activity or a recreational activity, teamwork is the basis of gaining a competitive advantage (6). Since the targeted success can only be possible by adopting a management approach appropriate to the requirements of the day (7), as in all institutions and organizations, the ability of sports institutions and organizations to work effectively and at the desired level of teamwork depends on the leadership ability of the management. There are some generally accepted common characteristics that all teams should have to create an effective and efficient team understanding (6). These;

- To have a common purpose and vision
- Creating healthy communication
- Team authorization
- A healthy conflict space and creativity
- A sense of belonging to the team
- Sharing of shared responsibility
- Commitment to the team

- Supporting individual development

The presence or emergence of these characteristics in the team is related to the leadership competence and style of the team leader. A team can only emerge if it is managed by competent leadership. Team climate is formed as a result of team members attributing common meanings to events (8). It is accepted that team climate is a structure consisting of three elements: commitment, trust, and innovation (9). Team members have complementary skills in the team, and each team member holds themselves accountable for the common goal (10). This situation indicates that the performance of team members as social beings should be managed on a target-based basis. A leadership approach that is accepted by the team members can guide the team climate and the success and high performance that the climate will bring with the mission, vision, and core values it will offer (11). Teams consist of two or more people and the interaction and communication of the members with each other serves the common goals of the organization. Since each of the members of the team is defined as a social being (12), it is necessary to bring the team members together in line with the common goals of the social group to which they belong (13) and to ensure coordination, coordination, supervision, and control in a planned manner. Intra-team communication should be established by the leadership with each team member and between the elements with each other at an aesthetic level. According to Goleman, leadership is not the art of dominating, but the art of persuading people to work together towards a common goal (14). It is now understood that the leaders who persuade and adopt aesthetic communication are accepted instead of the managers who shout orders. Organizational aesthetics is an important tool for team building and more human organizations. What will make the experiences that will reveal the aesthetic value in an organization, that is, the sensory value, aesthetic, is the aesthetic level of communication in the team. Managers' aesthetic communication competencies will gain more and more importance day by day (15).

The leadership sought should have the qualities of a coach with the ability to give responsibility to people, to invite them to responsibility, and to provide them with the opportunity to learn by learning from their own mistakes and successes. If goal-oriented coordination is desired in a team, the conflict should never be managed as one member prevailing over another team member. The ability of team members, who are social beings within the team, to establish close relationships with each other within the team is a bond that gives meaning to life outside the team. Such bonds mean individuals who respect the norms in social life. Teams are groups with a common goal and goal, and as stated by Emile Durkheim (1933), these groups act as an important buffer between the individual and society (16). There is cooperation in teamwork, and this cooperation emerges with the systematic integration of the efforts of the individuals who make up the team to achieve a common goal (4).

Teamwork is accepted as a basic tool for solving managerial problems, and its success will be shaped depending on the rules and methods applied by the organizational management approach (16).

Teams, which are the creators of important dynamics such as identity, attachment, harmony, social rapprochement, discussion, and negotiation on an individual and social scale (17), have become critical formations of organizational life in the twenty-first century (18). The new identity developed by the team members by identifying with the team they are included in is the common identity of the team that the other members of the team approve. Here, again, the leadership competencies of management come into play (19). Since the leader will be decisive in the success of a group (20) where individuals who share the responsibility for the results to be achieved within the organizational boundaries come together, the success of the leader can be understood by looking at the team climate and the achievements of the team. A good leader is naturally someone who knows his job very well, is flexible, promises team members in decision-making, and is open to suggestions on all aspects of the team. An effective leader will create a vision within the team, create changes, and unleash the talents of the team members (21). Each of the individuals that make up the team is a talent. It is important for each talent to be evaluated and recognized by the management within the framework of their knowledge and skills, and to emphasize their contribution and importance to the team (6). If creative ideas are valued and supported in a team, and if members can express their feelings and thoughts without fear of retaliation (22), they can live and support the three dimensions of the climate: engagement, trust, and innovation, while the team focuses on achieving its goals (8).

The concept of team spirit is another phenomenological concept and an important component of team climate. Team spirit and the members who share it make it possible to ensure unity in the team, to adopt goals in a common understanding, to accept standards and norms, to strengthen communication, and to internalize the rights and obligations arising from the team (16). To the extent that the sense of belonging develops, team spirit can also be mentioned. For this, team members must be able to internalize and adopt the norms of the team. At this point, the team leader is the implementer of the principles and principles that will make it possible for the team members to adopt the organizational norms as a whole with pride and satisfaction. At this point, it would be appropriate to talk about teamwork. Trust in team leaders directly affects the effectiveness of teamwork. In teamwork, there are authorities and authorizations. The in-team empowerment to be offered by the leader helps the team members to become aware that they are together with others in their work and responsibilities (23). One of the most important factors that make the team a team is the team leader. If the team is well managed, synergy will increase, the leader will gain the trust of the team members, and the feeling of gratitude will be reinforced as the team runs from success to success (13).

As can be understood from what has been conveyed so far, examining the grateful team climate is important for all team leaders who are intertwined with human resources. As for the subject of the research, the phenomenon of gratitude experienced in the team climate is much more than a simple emotion and is a perception that emerges in team members. Team climate has been seen to be related to the individual perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of team members, and there is a sharing of perceptions in team climate. Sharing perceptions strengthens the tendency to joint actions as a team and the commitment of members to each other and their duties (24). The sense of commitment among the members within the team, the level of interest of the team members in each other, and the degree of willingness to help each other develop by the climate of the team (25). Team climate not only creates a collaborative environment but also makes it easier for team members to attribute common meanings to events that are important to the team and to achieve the targeted results.

The team leader is the manager who can balance emotions and expectations (26), intra-team competition, and intra-team cooperation (5) dimensions in the team climate. To improve the quality of working conditions, the team leader should be able to evaluate and develop the personality traits of the members and support their psychological health (27). At this point, it is necessary to understand the concepts of psychological capital and positive psychology and then evaluate the phenomenon of gratitude in the team climate in the context of what has been explained so far. Positive psychology, which is considered to have developed under the leadership of Martin Seligman (28), helps the individual on his journey to meaning and happiness in life (29). Psychological capital, on the other hand, was first proposed by Fred Luthans (30). Psychological capital is characterized by self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience (31–33). In many of his studies (32–43), Luthans has defined psychological capital through four basic components such as hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and psychological resilience, and stated that the gratitude component can be added to these four basic components based on its improving and measurable effects on performance (27,38). The feeling of gratitude helps the team member to make the effort that will enable him to succeed in difficult tasks, to believe that he will achieve success in the future, to believe that there is a path to success in all circumstances, and to continue on his way by standing and persevering during crises (30,43). Gratitude is influenced by psychological capital (44), and when considered from the perspective of positive psychology, it is a prerequisite for important values (45). Gratitude is derived from the Latin words "gratia" meaning "goodness" and "gratus" meaning "gratifying" (46) and its Turkish equivalent is "gratitude, gratitude, knowing goodness" (27). According to Emmons, who has conducted numerous studies in the field of gratitude, gratitude is appreciation (46–48). Gratitude has the potential to make significant contributions to the individual and the team (49). Among the positive effects of the grateful climate on the team, results such as less burnout, less cynicism, higher proactive behavior, higher health and safety environment, higher job satisfaction, and less absenteeism due to illness were found (50).

It is accepted that gratitude improves organizational belonging behavior, strengthens teamwork (51), and has positive effects on self-confidence, mental resilience, and physical health (48,52,53). Again, the positive and significant relationship between happiness, life satisfaction, well-being, and gratitude has been demonstrated through many scientific studies (54–64) (27). In an interesting study conducted by Wood (65),

it is reported that sleep quality is higher in individuals who experience gratitude. In another study conducted by Wood et al., gratitude is strongly and positively associated with mental health and negatively associated with depression and stress (27). It has been pointed out that individuals who experience a sense of gratitude can focus on the solution instead of being depressed because they have more positive coping skills (66). Gratitude is a pleasant experience related to positive emotions (2) and it has been determined that expressing gratitude contributes positively to a person's physical, mental, and social well-being (44,63).

In a doctoral dissertation study (28) on the relationship between adolescent well-being and gratitude, the researcher quoted from a study conducted in 1976. Accordingly, it has been determined that a child's ability to thank for the candy given to him by an adult is quite weak if he is younger than six years old, while this ability develops at the age of ten and above (67). Based on this finding, it can be assumed that the expression of gratitude develops only between the ages of 7 and 10 (68). Experiencing positive emotions such as satisfaction and joy expands one's thought-action vocabulary (69). As a positive emotional environment, a climate of gratitude will also expand the actions and thoughts of teamwork, support positive relationships between peers (70), reduce stress (71), and prevent violent behaviors in a less anxious and happier environment (72) (73). Since the grateful individual is more successful in coping with problems (74), the members of a grateful team will be able to re-analyze and evaluate possible negative situations and continue on their way towards their goals thanks to the new ways of thinking and positive affect they will develop (75).

It has been reported in many scientific studies that gratitude has been accepted as a strong predictor of well-being (66,76,77) (78). When gratitude begins to be experienced as a climate within the team, it will be possible to respond to kindness with kindness as a moral motivation among members and prevent destructive behavior (30). One of the issues that the team leader should pay attention to here is that some individual characteristics have been identified that negatively affect the development of gratitude. These characteristics are the perception of victimization (79), inability to accept one's shortcomings (80), jealousy and anger (81), excessive emphasis on materialistic values (82), insensitivity to the rights of others (3), failure to take responsibility (83) and narcissism. It is quoted as (28). According to the results of a doctoral thesis examining the predictive effect of gratitude on well-being in adolescence, it is understood that there is a significant positive relationship between well-being and its sub-dimensions of commitment, determination, optimism, relatedness, happiness, and gratitude (28). The research in question cited literature that supports this. Some of these are as below. Accordingly, in a study examining the relationship between maternal attachment and organizational commitment, the mediating role of gratitude was emphasized (84). Another study is on the relationships between post-traumatic development and gratitude (85). Other studies have demonstrated the significant effect of gratitude on subjective well-being (61,63,86,87). The results of another study on gratitude conducted by Bono et al. are quite remarkable.

Accordingly, it has been reported that students who were able to develop the level of gratitude determined at the beginning of high school education until the end of high school education felt more empathy, self-awareness, self-efficacy, goals for the future, a strong sense of identity and motivation to improve society (28). Another study conducted on university students examined the relationship between gratitude and aggression and the mediating role of empathy (88). Another eight-week study on the well-being of university students focused on the effectiveness of gratitude intervention (89). In addition to the literature that has demonstrated a significant relationship between gratitude and positive social behavior patterns (28), there are also studies examining gratitude in a cultural context. One completed cross-cultural study found that behavioral factors within cultural context differentiate the effects of gratitude on well-being (90). Another interesting study is about whether gratitude intervention will reduce body dissatisfaction (91). Another similar study examined the effects of gratitude on psychological and physical well-being (48). In a content analysis study reminiscent of the method of this research, research was conducted on the compositions written by school-age children about the subjects they felt grateful for (92). Another supporting research result is that people who experience gratitude have a higher degree of motivation for behaviors that demonstrate social proactivity and are more energetic in maintaining their moral behavior. In this way, it has been determined that these people exhibit less destructive attitudes and behaviors (2).

The speed and impact of today's technological change conditions manifest themselves in the proactive attitudes and behaviors of team members. To lead and manage this proactivity, it is inevitable for team leaders to develop paradoxical leadership abilities. The increase in academic publications on paradoxical leadership in recent years may become more meaningful when evaluated from this perspective. (93). Paradox is the contradiction between interdependent elements (94). It is reported that today, paradoxes have become an ordinary phenomenon and leaders are expected to demonstrate competence in dealing with paradoxes while dealing with the tensions in the leadership role (95,96). "If excellent companies know anything, it is how to manage paradox" (97) is a striking statement. Organizations are built on paradoxes due to the independent human subject on one side and organizational patterns on the other. It is important to simultaneously integrate and meet competing demands in the organization. Management of paradox is about trying to accept and explore tensions rather than repressing them (98–100).

The subject of leadership inherently contains paradoxical tensions, and the paradoxical approach is a perspective that encourages the development of leadership competencies in the conditions of rapid change that are unique to our century (101). In today's conditions, the success of leaders should be sought in their ability to act flexibly and evaluate problems from different paradigms according to the way they arise. Organizational paradoxes within organizations can occur at macro and micro levels (102). The paradoxical leadership approach is becoming increasingly important in today's complex business environments (103). The effect of the paradoxical leadership approach on the performance of team members is accepted (93,104,105). Findings that the paradoxical leadership style increases employee ambidexterity, employee creativity (106), and organizational learning (107) are also mentioned (96).

The roots of paradox theory appear to be based on Buddhist and Hindu philosophies (108), and it is accepted that the subject of paradox was first discussed in academic literature by Cameron and Quin (109) in 1988 (96). Zhang et al. (2015) combined the paradoxical approach with leadership research with the concept of "paradox leadership", which is based on the Yin and Yang philosophy theory in China (102). However, over time, it has been reported that different and comprehensive studies have been conducted by many researchers in the context of management and organization (98). Paradoxes involve contradictory but interrelated elements that exist simultaneously (110). Paradoxical issues, each of which can be considered correct and logical when evaluated individually, become inconsistent and incompatible when brought together. This situation manifests itself in teams, in other words, in organizational cultures (109). A paradox is a situation that seems contradictory within itself but can be considered both true and false. According to Johnson (2014), human beings were born into a paradoxical order (111). For example, even our breathing is in two dependent states. This is also the case in organizations. For example, although it is necessary to be centralized to ensure the coordination of organizational units with the whole, there is also a need for a clear distribution of authority and encouraging initiatives so that the units are responsible for their work (112). If seemingly contradictory conditions can be managed by adopting a paradoxical "both and that" approach, they can contribute to the satisfaction of team members and the success of teamwork. Since the classical rational decision aims to approach the exact correct solution in general by acting according to the idea of "either this/or", it rejects paradoxes instead of solving them. Resolving paradoxes is only possible by bringing opposing elements side by side and making evaluations within the framework of "both that/and that" possibilities (95,96). Paradoxical leaders have learned to live with paradox, as Heraclitus stated, "Nothing endures but changes." The fundamental paradox in the leadership style of paradoxical leaders is that they are leaders who do not lead. The powers of these leaders; are in their capacity to allow, not to control; not in their wisdom, but in their accessibility; It lies not in their defense of their autonomy, but in their ability to adapt. (113).

Paradoxical leadership may make it possible to explore the structure of tension in the team climate and manage members' demands. Rather than choosing between tensions, it is necessary to make an effort to meet different demands (110) and to succeed in moving from the "either/or" dilemma to the "both/and" approach. The four key skills that help leaders embrace paradox are cognitive complexity, self-confidence, conflict management, and communication. Since paradoxes are dynamic, the demands of team members that are met today may change tomorrow. The leader must monitor change closely. In addition to increasing short-term performance, it should ensure long-term sustainability (100,114). For the organization, being more profitable in the long run from conflicting demands can be achieved by leaders embracing not just one of

the conflicting demands but all of them together (112). Paradoxical leadership is considered to be positively related to harmony, proactivity, and work commitment experienced at the level of team members (93,115). In the context of paradox categories, the four dimensions of paradoxical leadership (110) are as follows (93);

1. In the context of competitive paradoxes, leaders must show followers how to focus on both the details of a specific task and the big picture.
2. Within the framework of learning paradoxes, leaders should be able to show their followers how to look for new solutions as well as well-known approaches.
3. Within the scope of organizational paradoxes, leaders should be able to be role models in ensuring stability in processes and at the same time allowing flexibility.
4. Within the framework of paradoxes of belonging, leaders should teach their followers how to protect their values and adopt the cultural norms of the organization.

METHOD

Research Model: Based on the decision that phenomenology was the most appropriate research design for the research problem, the descriptive phenomenology design was adopted in the research (116,117). The purpose of phenomenology is to make sense of lived experiences. The phenomenon analyzed in the research is the phenomenon of grateful team climate. Since the grateful team climate emerges as a result of the feeling of gratitude experienced by team members, the phenomenon of grateful team climate can only be analyzed through the experiences of team members within the team (117).

Based on this, the relational screening model was used in this research, in which fencing athletes who accepted to participate in the research completely voluntarily were selected by convenience sampling method. The research model that aims to determine the change or degree of two or more variables together is called the relational screening model (118). The research was designed as a mixed-method-based survey study. The reason for using the quantitative method in the research is that it is necessary to determine whether a climate of gratitude already exists in the team. From this point of view, the team could be characterized primarily by the phenomenon of gratitude. After determining the existence of a grateful climate in the team, the team members' thoughts and actions were analyzed phenomenologically in a qualitative approach through their answers to the experience-oriented questions posed to them.

At this stage, team member experiences were obtained through open-ended questions, and the data obtained were interpreted and discussed in the context of a paradoxical leadership style. Thus, the relationship between the athletes' experiences and the results obtained from the applied gratitude scale could be revealed. The main purpose of qualitative research is to reveal perceptions and experiences. How the qualitative data explains the quantitative results makes the mixed method and relational scanning model of the research evident. The questions asked to the participants were designed to shed light on the factors that contribute to the level of gratitude in the group from a phenomenological perspective. In phenomenological research, participants are asked two general questions. These are "What experiences have you had regarding the phenomenon?", "What environments or situations have affected your experiences with the phenomenon?" These questions asked to the participants contribute to the understanding of experiences regarding the phenomenon under consideration. These suggested question types were adapted to the problem addressed in this research (116).

In line with Luria's (2019) approach, a group-based gratitude climate was adopted in the study, and data on gratitude at the individual or inter-individual level was not collected. Climate perception at the team level suggested by Luria (2019) emerges through a dynamic process consisting of three stages (119). According to this:

1. Climate emergence occurs when members of the same group share similar experiences that contribute to the emergence of climate.
2. Interpretation of climate,
3. Group members maintain their behaviors and perceptions based on their common thoughts and experiences.

These three stages are accepted as a cyclical process that develops and maintains a common team climate at the group level. Thus, the analysis of the process reveals the individual reasons why gratitude is experienced in the team, that is, the reasons under environmental, psychological, and economic influence, as well as the managerial reasons, that is, the reasons under the influence of leadership. Based on all these, during the analysis phase, participants' expressions of gratitude were sought in their answers, and for this purpose, the data obtained from the participants were meticulously read over and over again. Based on the data obtained, it was aimed to reach the phenomenon by creating codes and themes from these codes in the Maxqda program (120).

The content analysis analyzed within the framework of interpretive and inductive approach in the Maxqda program was analyzed in five stages as follows (121,122)

1. Sections that provide meaningful integrity within the data are coded
2. The coded sections were organized into certain categories and themes were found.
3. The consistency of codes and themes was checked.
4. Code and themes have been finalized.
5. Data were described and findings were interpreted according to codes and themes.

The five distinctive attitudes (102) adopted in the code map towards paradoxical leader behavior are as follows within the framework of the theoretical basis (93).

1. Combining Self-centeredness with Altruism: Although leaders are self-confident and charismatic, they must be able to look after not only their interests but also the interests of their followers.
2. Maintaining Distance and Being Close to Followers: the leader must be able to adjust social distance appropriately. Excessive closeness can lead to negative consequences. It values both distance and proximity to help maintain the leader's authority and influence.
3. Treating all team members equally while allowing individuality: An example of this is when the leader rewards team members but presents each reward by individual differences and positions.
4. Maintaining Control over Decision Making While Promoting Autonomy:
5. Enforcing Business Rules While Allowing Flexibility: They both need high rules and allow their subordinates to make mistakes.

Purpose of the research

This research aims to investigate the relationship between the feeling of gratitude in team members and paradoxical leadership behavior in a sports team where a grateful team climate is experienced. For this purpose, the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of the athletes in a fencing team characterized by the phenomenon of gratitude were consulted. "What are the paradoxical leadership behaviors that lead team members to feel gratitude?" question constitutes the main problem of this research.

Research Group

Ethics committee approval was received for the research from the Selçuk University Faculty of Architecture and Design Publication Ethics Board dated 13/12/2023 and decision number 10/04. While the population of the study is the participants who do fencing sports for reactive purposes in Konya, the sample is 15 fencing athletes who are active in the "Legendary Fencing" club.

Phenomenological research is conducted with individuals ranging from 5 to 25 people who have fully experienced the phenomenon. Creswell suggested ten (10) people when proposing this number (123–125). Phenomenological research aims to reach the essence of the phenomenon by reaching enough people who have experienced the phenomenon.

Collection of Data

Data was collected by volunteer individuals participating in fencing sports, who answered the scale items via the online form using the measurement and evaluation tools within the period they were convenient for. Application permission and research permission were obtained from the team managers, and the application was carried out voluntarily and without obtaining identity information. Quantitative evaluation questions aiming to reveal the existence of a gratitude climate were followed by open-ended experiential questions that will enable the gratitude phenomenon to be analyzed in the context of paradoxical leadership behaviors. For this purpose, the participants are asked to describe 1) an unforgettable memory they had with their team leaders, 2) coaching behaviors that made them feel positive and negative when they evaluated the training, 3) their feelings about success and failure in their sports goals, and finally 4) the place of the team and the training in their lives. , they were asked to share. The presence of a gratitude climate in the sample was determined by using the nine-item Sports Team Grateful Climate Questionnaire (126).

The scale is a current nine-item scale for which validity and reliability analyses have been conducted, aiming to detect and understand the existence of a gratitude climate in sports teams. The data obtained from the sample through this scale demonstrated that there was a climate of gratitude in the team. It should not be ignored that the team leader's behavior has a mediating effect on the internal and environmental causes of the feeling of gratitude that arises in team members.

On the other hand, considering that sports teams should be success-oriented and disciplined structures, the leader's ability to cause a feeling of gratitude in the team members must contain a paradoxical attitude and attitude in itself. For this reason, another scale used during the creation of the code map in the study was the Paradoxical Leadership Behavior scale developed by Zhang et al. (2015) (127). Zhang et al. (2015) developed, the paradoxical leadership behavior scale consisting of five sub-dimensions and 22 items, and its Turkish adaptation was previously carried out by Akça and Tuna (2019) after validity and reliability analysis (112). This scale was not directly applied to the researchers, and a code map was prepared to enable phenomenological analysis for the content analysis carried out in the MAXQDA 24 ANALYTIC Pro program through the dimensions and items of the scale.

Analysis of Data

After reaching a healthy data set suitable for phenomenological research, the data coding and analysis process was started. At this stage, the data obtained was first read meticulously several times to identify common themes. Important words and sentences were identified from the participant expressions that reveal how and in which interactions the phenomenon of gratitude is experienced. In the process of determining the themes, the research questions were taken into consideration and a deductive method was adopted. The athletes interviewed were coded between K1 and K15, respectively. Content analysis was carried out by separating the data obtained from the interviews into themes and sub-themes in the Maxqda 24 Analytics Pro qualitative research program. In ensuring the validity and reliability of the data, the elements of credibility, consistency, and confirmability (128) were taken into consideration. While determining the research questions and evaluating the answers given, the opinions of experienced human resources managers were consulted. Consistent information was obtained from the interviews held to ensure the internal and external validity of the research. The opinions of a sociology expert were taken during the creation of the Maxqda 24 Analytics Pro code map. For research reliability, subjective evaluations were avoided during the preparation of the findings, and reporting was carried out in line with the data obtained. Consistency was taken into consideration to ensure internal reliability of the research, and confirmability was taken to ensure external reliability. Since the Maxqda 24 Analytics Pro program used in the analysis of the research made it possible to systematically analyze the content of the research data, the validity and reliability of the research were also supported in this respect. The codes and themes of the data obtained from the application are reported in detail under the heading of findings.

FINDINGS

Within the scope of the research, 15 participants were included in the research. Participants were coded as K1-K15. The study is grouped under 4 themes, as seen in Figure 1; The themes are the climate of gratitude in the team, the paradoxical leadership approach, the place of the team/training in life, and the emotions felt in cases of success/failure.

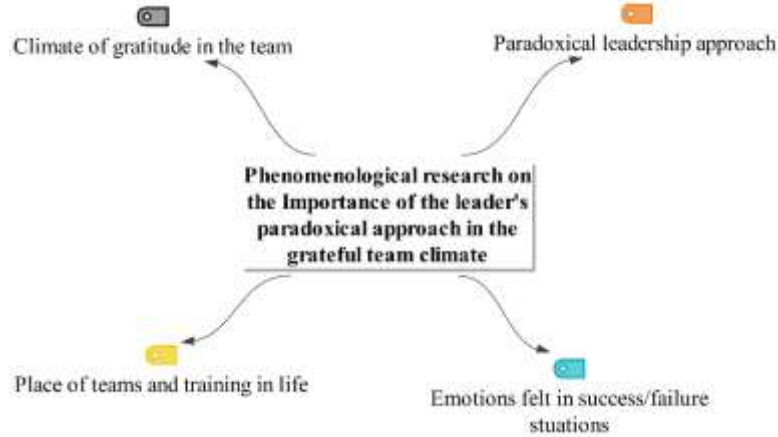
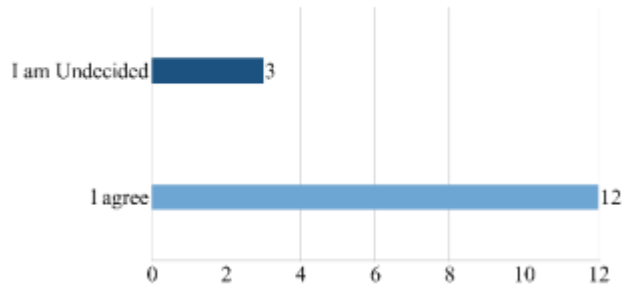


Figure 1. Theme Reveal

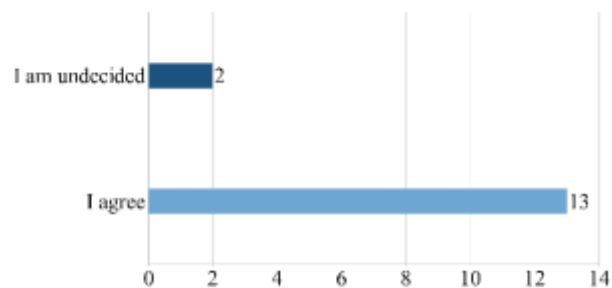
Theme: The Climate of Gratitude in the Team

First of all, based on the lived experiences, it was determined whether there was a feeling of gratitude in the sample where the phenomenological analysis would be carried out. Accordingly, the presence of a climate of gratitude in the team is as follows.



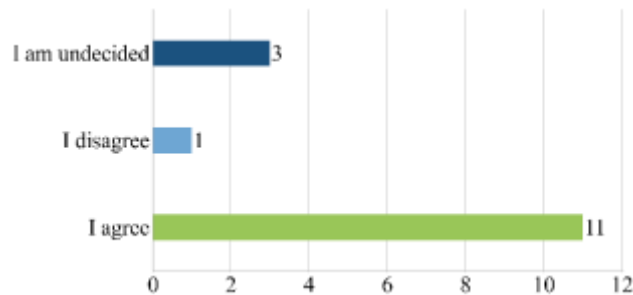
Graph 1. Gratitude for Educational Resources/Opportunities

To the expressions of gratitude for the educational resources/opportunities offered, 3 of the participants answered "undecided" and 12 people answered, "agree". The graph of gratitude for educational resources/opportunities offered is shown in Graph 1.



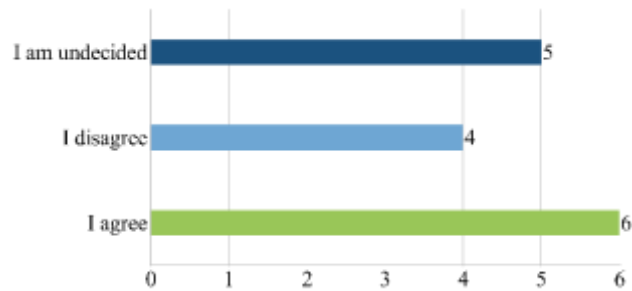
Graph 2. The Team thinks that success will be possible with the efforts of the coaches

To the statement that the team thinks that success will be possible with the efforts of the coaches, 2 participants answered "I am undecided" and 13 people answered, "I agree". The graph of the team's belief that success will occur with the efforts of the coaches is shown in Graph 2.



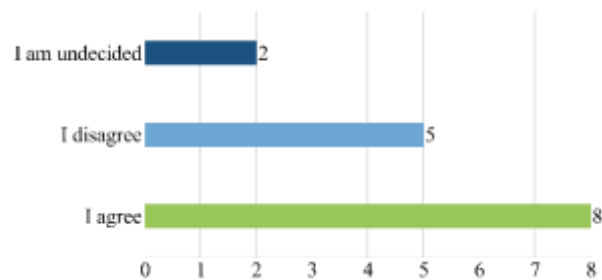
Graph 3. The team can easily express that they are grateful for the support

The team can easily express that they are grateful for the support. 3 of the participants answered "I am undecided", 1 person answered "I disagree", and 11 people answered, "I agree". The team can easily express that they are grateful for the support as shown in Graph 3.



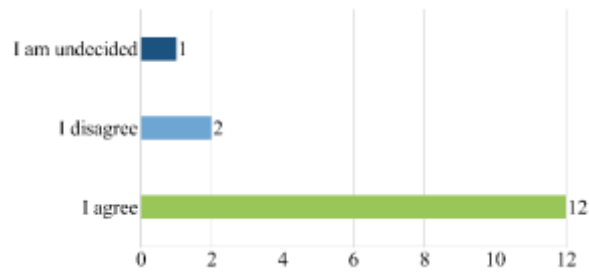
Graph 4. Thinking it's important to feel Grateful

To the statement that team members think it is important to feel gratitude, 5 of the participants answered "undecided", 6 people answered "disagree" and 1 person answered, "agree". The graph that team members think it is important to feel gratitude is shown in graph 4.



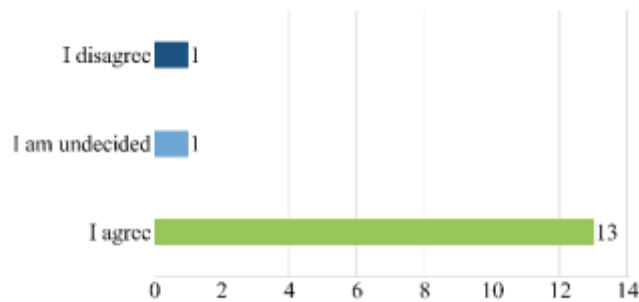
Graph 5. Statements that can refer to providing unpaid help in the team

To the statements that can refer to providing unpaid help in the team, 2 of the participants answered "I am undecided", 1 person answered "I disagree" and 11 people answered, "I agree". The graph of unpaid help in the team is shown in Graph 5.



Graph 6. Expressions of feeling grateful for the opportunities offered by the team managers

To the expressions of feeling grateful for the opportunities offered by the team managers, 1 participant responded "I am undecided", 2 participants responded "I disagree", and 12 participants responded, "I agree". The graph of feeling grateful for the opportunities offered by team managers is shown in Graph 6.



Graph 7. Expressions of the team members' efforts in response to the training/opportunities

To the expressions of the team members' efforts in response to the training/opportunities they received, 1 of the participants answered "I am undecided", 1 person answered "I disagree", and 13 people answered, "I agree". The graph of the training/opportunities received by the team members versus their effort is shown in Graph 7.

Theme: Paradoxical Leadership Approach

Six codes were created in the theme of the paradoxical leadership approach, which is the first theme discussed within the scope of the research: maintaining both distance and closeness, fulfilling job requirements while allowing flexibility, being self-centered, exhibiting altruism, giving a feeling of trust, granting autonomy, maintaining control, treating the individual individually and These are codes for being at equal distance.

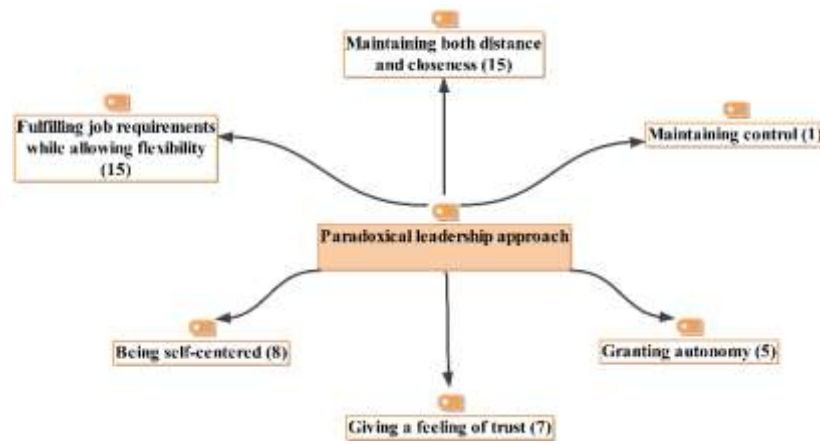


Figure 2. Paradoxical Leadership Approach Hierarchical Code-Sub-Code Model

In the paradoxical leadership approach theme, participants expressed intense opinions about maintaining both distance and closeness. Participants stated that they were positively affected by their coaches' motivational discourses, but at the same time, they were afraid of them. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"Frankly, it affects me positively when the coaches treat everyone as they deserve and give us motivating words, but when the opposite situation occurs, for example, when they scold someone for no real reason, it affects me badly, even if it is not me. But I can admit that this situation provides discipline in the team. Even if they are not angry with me, I think they take it upon myself and try to get better." (K4)

"I can't forget the reassuring words they spoke to me during our first training session. I am shy of them, but their motivation is among my best memories." (K14).

Another code expressed by participants in the paradoxical leadership approach theme is meeting job requirements while allowing flexibility. Participants stated that their coaches were very caring and understanding during the training sessions while maintaining seriousness. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"Their one-on-one attention during training is very positive. Even though we know they will get angry when training as a team, they are humorous and gentle enough to easily ask anything on one." (K3)

"His sense of fun makes me feel good. But I try not to seem like I'm going there for fun I remain serious. We laugh at the jokes, but the downside is that they don't seem to allow it. "I don't know which is positive and which is negative." (K14).

Another code expressed by the participants in the theme of the paradoxical leadership approach is being both self-centered and exhibiting altruism. Participants stated that their coaches were caring and supportive. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"Sometimes, they do this even better when they are very devoted to their work, and sometimes it may seem like they are very uninterested, and at those times, a question mark may arise. But they show great interest again in a short time." (K6)

"On the positive side, he is very supportive and it is noticeable that he has a lot of effort for everyone in the team. They are patient and try very hard to explain something. "They are friendly, funny and honest." (K10).

Another code expressed by the participants in the theme of the paradoxical leadership approach is providing a feeling of trust. Participants stated that their coaches gave them a feeling of trust. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"I can't talk about it as a memory, but my coach's reassuring behavior and the way he looked at me with confidence are the best moments that I remember that touched me the most. Even though I am afraid of them, I love and trust them very much." (K9)

"I can't forget the words they spoke to me and gave me reassurance during our first training session. I am shy of them, but their motivation is among my best memories." (K14)

Another code expressed by the participants in the paradoxical leadership approach theme is both granting autonomy and maintaining control. Participants stated that they could feel different with their coaches' patience and perseverance. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"They didn't say anything was okay, this gave us determination, we can't ask them for anything anyway, they seem harsh, but they're not. Sometimes I feel like the man is being singled out. But when they do the same things to me after a while, I can feel like I am being distinguished." (K5)

"They make me feel that they trust me and they are patient in this regard. Even I can't be this patient with myself. They seem very angry, especially during training, but if they are angry, I say there is a reason and I don't see anything negative." (K7).

Another code expressed by the participants in the paradoxical leadership approach theme is treating each person individually and being at an equal distance. Participants stated that their coaches approached everyone at an equal distance. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"Frankly, it affects me positively when the coaches treat everyone as they deserve and give us motivating words, but when the opposite happens, for example, when they scold someone for no real reason, it affects me badly, even if I am not the one." (K4)

Kod Sistemi	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	K6	K7	K8	K9	K10	K11	K12	K13	K14	K15	TOPLAM
Paradoxical Leadership Approach																0
Giving a Feeling Of Trust				■			■	■	■	■				■		7
Maintaining Both Distance And Closeness	■			■		■		■			■		■	■	■	15
Being Self-Centered		■	■			■			■	■				■	■	8
Maintaining Control				■												1
Fulfilling Job Requirements While Allowing Flexibility	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	15
Granting Autonomy	■				■		■			■		■				5
TOPLAM	4	3	3	5	2	4	4	2	3	5	2	3	4	5	2	51

Table 1. Paradoxical Leadership Approach Code Matrix

The theme of the paradoxical leadership approach was examined according to the documents, and the code matrix scanner for this is included in Table 1. Accordingly, K1, K4, K6, K11, K13, K14 of the participants focused on the code of maintaining both distance and closeness, K2 on the code of being self-centered and displaying altruism, K3, K10, K12 on the code of fulfilling job requirements while allowing flexibility, and K7 on the codes of giving confidence.

The theme of Emotions Felt in Success/Failure Situations

The second theme discussed within the scope of the research, the emotions felt in success/failure situations, is divided into two categories; case of failure and case of success. In the first category, in case of failure, 10 codes were created; Feeling of shame/embarrassment, sadness, demoralization, returning to normal by focusing on the matches, feeling strong with the criticism of the coaches, regret, stress, anxiety, fear of not being able to learn new techniques are hate codes.



Figure 3. Emotions Felt in Success/Failure Situations Hierarchical Code-Sub-Code Model

In the case of the failure category, participants expressed intense opinions about shame/embarrassment. Participants stated that they felt ashamed of their coaches when they failed. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"I feel embarrassed when I fail. Even though I'm intimidated by my coaches, I feel stronger than before when they take my videos criticize me, and tell me what I need to do better. My confidence that I will do it is increasing." (K3)

"My coach, who is always harsh when I cannot do it in training, tells me the moves I cannot do in a more understanding way when I cannot win in the match. "I am indescribably ashamed of this." (K12).

Another code expressed by the participants in the category of failure is sadness. Participants expressed that they felt sad when they failed. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"When I lose, I feel very embarrassed and saddened by the efforts my teacher made for me." (K7)

"When I lost a very important match, my coach lit a cigarette at the end of the match even though he did not like smoking, just because of me, he was very sad and thoughtful. His situation made me very sad, too. I decided to work hard. "I used to get angry at the warnings they gave me in anger, but now I try to fulfill them immediately." (K13).

Another code expressed by the participants in the category of failure is demoralization. Participants stated that they felt demoralized when they failed. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"There is a great demoralization. But with the warnings that we need to focus on the next matches, I usually return to normal after a while. My morale is getting back to normal. So, when I get upset, shame occurs, but then work begins that helps me eliminate this shame with my effort." (K1).

Another code expressed by the participants in the category of failure is returning to normal by focusing on matches. Participants stated that in cases where they were unsuccessful, they returned to normal order by focusing on the matches again. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"There is a great demoralization. But with the warnings that we need to focus on the next matches, I usually return to normal after a while. "My morale is returning to its previous state." (K1)

"When I lose, I feel very embarrassed and sad for the efforts my teacher made for me. But they give me great support by telling me sweetly about my shortcomings for the next and next matches, without really making it obvious." (K7).

Another code expressed by the participants in the category of failure is feeling strongly about the criticism of the coaches. Participants stated that they felt stronger with the criticism and suggestions of their coaches. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"I feel embarrassed when I fail. Even though I'm intimidated by my coaches, I feel stronger than before when they take my videos criticize me, and tell me what I need to do better. My confidence that I will do it is increasing." (K3).

Another code expressed by the participants in the category of failure is regret. Participants stated that they felt regret when they could not perform the techniques they could in some matches. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"There are matches where I feel regret, and my coach warns and tells me what I couldn't do when I could have done it anyway. My teacher also gets angry when he loses, but I feel that he is angry without upsetting me and I know he is right. "Just because I couldn't do it when I could have done it." (K13).

Another code in which opinions are expressed by participants in the category of failure is stress. Participants stated that they experienced stress when they failed. Participant statements on the subject are as follows:

"When I lose, feelings of Hate, Stress, Anxiety, Unhappiness, and Anger arise." (K13).

Another code that is expressed by participants in the category of failure is anxiety. Participants expressed that they experienced anxiety when they failed. Participant statements on the subject are as follows:

"When I lose, feelings of Hate, Stress, Anxiety, Unhappiness, and Anger arise." (K13).

Another code expressed by the participants in the category of failure is the fear of not being able to learn new techniques. Participants expressed that they were afraid of not being able to learn new techniques when they could not apply the techniques they learned. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"I kept losing because I was just starting, but I was relieved because my coach said I needed time. However, my biggest fear right now is not being able to move on to a new stage because he said that if I fail to succeed in a technique he taught me, he will never teach me a new one. "I followed the matches of all the friends and children in the team wholeheartedly, I was happy in the successes, and I was sadder than them in the failures" (P5).

Another code expressed by the participants in the category of failure is hate. Participants stated that they felt hatred when they failed. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"When I lose, feelings of Hate, Stress, Anxiety, Unhappiness, and Anger arise." (K13)

Kod Sistemi	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	K6	K7	K8	K9	K10	K11	K12	K13	K14	K15	TOPLAM
In case of failure																0
Regret													■			1
Anxiety													■			1
Stress													■			1
Hate													■			1
Sadness					■	■	■						■		■	5
Fear of not being able to learn new techniques are					■											1
Feeling strong with the criticism of the coaches			■													2
Demoralization	■	■														3
Returning to normal by focusing on the matches	■						■			■						3
Feeling of shame/embarrassment	■		■				■	■		■	■	■	■			8
TOPLAM	4	1	3	0	2	1	3	1	0	2	1	2	5	0	1	26

Table 2. Code Matrix in Case of Failure

In case of failure, the category was examined according to the documents, and the code matrix browser for this is given in Table 2. Accordingly, the participants focused on the K1 code of demoralization, the K3 code of feeling strong due to the coaches' criticism, and the K12 code of shame/embarrassment.

Within the scope of the research, 5 codes were created in the success category, which is the second category of the theme of emotions felt in success/failure situations; Excitement/happiness, satisfaction with success, feelings of pride, gratitude, and the idea that the coaches' efforts were not in vain are the codes. In the case of the success category, participants expressed intense opinions about excitement/happiness.

Participants stated that they were happy and excited in the matches they were successful in. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"In success, they can and feel happiness. When they lose, the opposite happens. Meetings where criticism is

made are good for us to regain my excitement." (K2)

"I was very happy when I was successful. "It feels like growing up and it's nice to feel like I have teachers who are proud of me." (K15).

Another code expressed by the participants in the success category is satisfaction with success. Participants stated that the feeling of accomplishment satisfied them. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"We have achieved many successes together. Thanks to my team leader, I eliminated a national athlete. It is a great pressure for them to watch me from the sidelines and give warnings, but I think I am successful thanks to their attention." (K2)

"I love being successful so much that I do whatever I can to achieve this, and achieving success as a result of these efforts satisfies me in every respect." (K4).

Another code expressed by the participants in the category of success is pride. Participants stated that they were proud of themselves when they were successful. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"I feel proud of myself when there is success, it makes me incredibly proud when my coach congratulates me." (K6)

"Happiness and Pride when you win." (K13).

Another code expressed by the participants in the category of success is the feeling of gratitude. Participants expressed that they felt grateful to their coaches when they were successful. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"In successful situations, I feel grateful. I think that I succeeded and won a sport that I did not know of, thanks to my coach. Otherwise, I feel embarrassed. But my teacher makes me forget immediately and that he will get angry if I don't improve myself. They do this very professionally." (K8)

"I feel nothing but gratitude towards my coaches, whether the result is success or failure. Thanks to them, I live this. But it is clear that when failure occurs, they are the first thing that comes to my mind and I feel great shame, I feel that I have wasted the efforts of my coaches. "It seems like they're going to get angry, but they always motivate me and prepare me for the next match." (K10).

Another code expressed by the participants in the success category is the idea that the coaches' efforts were not in vain. Participants stated that when they were successful, they showed that their coaches' efforts and efforts were not in vain. Participant expressions related to the subject are as follows:

"As for friends, it makes me happy again if my friends are happy for me because it shows that they are mature individuals and aware that they will improve themselves thanks to my success. "I also like to show that my coaches' efforts were not in vain when I am successful." (K4).

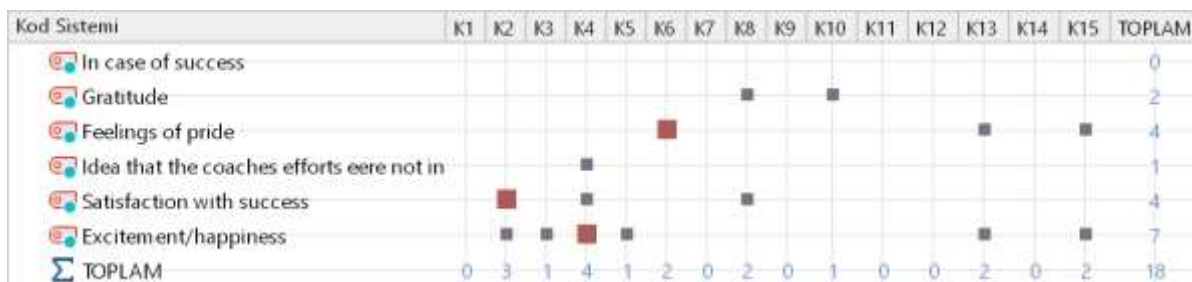


Table 3. Code Matrix in Case of Success

In case of success, the category was examined according to the documents, and the code matrix browser for this is given in Table 3. Accordingly, the participants focused on the K2 code of satisfaction with success, the K4 code of excitement/happiness, and the K6 code of feeling proud.

Team: The Place of Teams and Training in Life

In the third theme discussed within the scope of the research, the place of team/training in life, four codes were created; In the most important place of life, sports that are done with love, feeling good/happy, and stress-relieving/relaxing are the codes.

In the third theme discussed within the scope of the research, the place of team/training in life, four codes were created; In the most important place of life, sports that are done with love, feeling good/happy, and stress-relieving/relaxing are the codes.

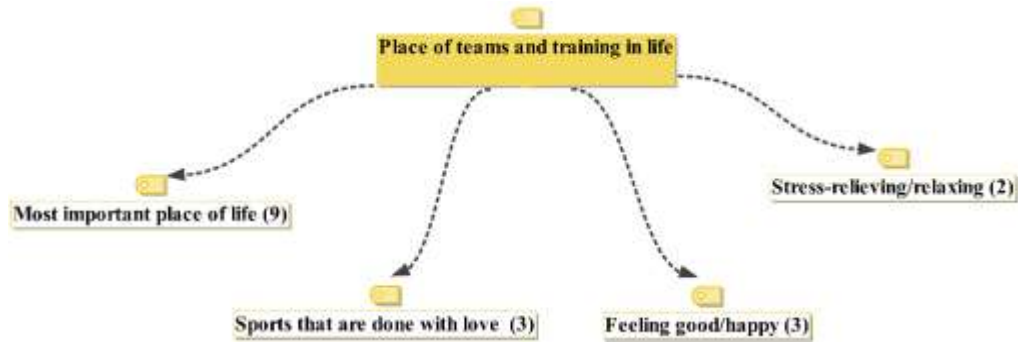


Figure 4. The Place of Team/Training in Life Hierarchical Code-Sub-Code Model

On the theme of the place of team/training in life, the participants expressed intense opinions about the most important place in life. Participants stated that their training has a very important place in their lives. Participant statements on the subject are as follows:

"It is very important to be a national fencer, to have Turkish degrees. Studying at the university for free thanks to sports. What can I tell you. It's a very important place in my life." (K5)

"First place for me in my life" (K11)

"Since most of my life has been spent in these trainings, it has become a big part of my life." (K14).

Another code that is expressed by the participants on the theme of the place of the team/training in life is the sport that is done with love. Participants stated that they love sports. Participant statements on the subject are as follows:

"It's a sport that I love and willing." (K7)

"It's one of my favorite activities in my life and one that I care about a lot." (K8).

Another code that is expressed by the participants in the theme of the life of the team/training is feeling good/happy. Participants stated that the workouts made them good and happy. Participant statements on the subject are as follows:

"Training makes me feel good, if I'm confused, training makes everything clear, but it's like home, I feel comfortable when I'm training." (K4)

"It positively affects my biological and psychological state." (K6)

"It's where I'm happy." (K10).

Another code that was expressed by the participants on the theme of the life of the team/training is the place of stress relief/relaxation. Participants stated that the workouts were relaxing and that they relieved their stress. Participant statements on the subject are as follows:

"It's my only stress-relieving environment and place of relaxation in life." (K1)

"Training makes me feel good, if I'm confused, training makes everything clear, but it's like home, I feel comfortable when I'm training." (K4)

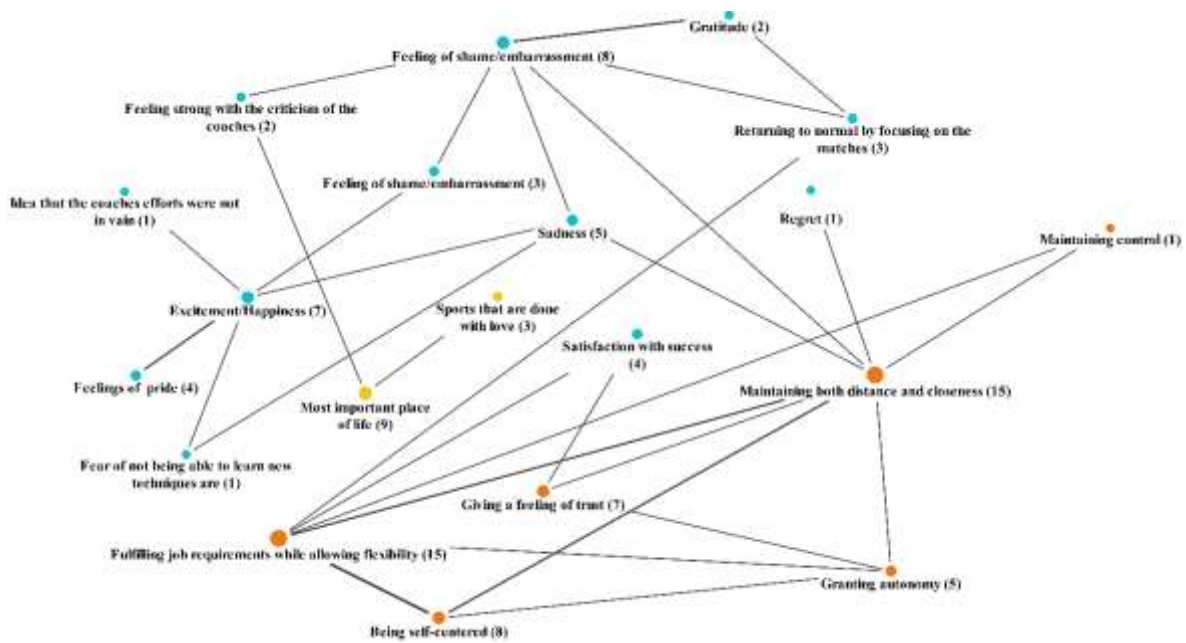


Figure 5. Code Map

The codes frequently mentioned by the participants are shown in Figure 5. The map shows the relationships between codes and which codes are frequently mentioned together. Lines are shown to reflect the relationship of more frequently mentioned codes that are mentioned together.



Figure 6. Code Cloud

The distribution of participant expressions of all participants by intensity is shown in Figure 6. Codes with larger fonts indicate expressions that are used more intensively, while expressions with smaller fonts indicate that codes are used less intensively.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that there was a climate of gratitude in the sample where the research was carried out. It can be said that team members are individuals who are capable of expressing their feelings of gratitude easily. These abilities are important in terms of providing the content richness of the answers to be obtained from the experiential open-ended questions to be directed to them. In addition, team members have clearly stated their efforts to show the value of the training they have received and the opportunities they have through their success. These feelings are another indicator of the positive psychology they feel towards the team and team leaders. Team members also expressed their gratitude for the opportunities they have and the training they have received. The findings clearly showed that there was a climate of gratitude in the sample where the research was carried out.

The relationship between the dynamics within the team and paradoxical leadership behaviors that contributed to the emergence of the phenomenon in the answers given to the open-ended questions posed to the sample, which was characterized by the phenomenon of gratitude, was sought by content analysis. In this context, when the theme of the emotions experienced by the team members in case of success and/or failure was examined, it was seen that the team members felt embarrassed in case of failure, and they experienced excitement and happiness in case of success. This situation can be considered as strengthening the emergence of the phenomenon as a natural result of the bond that team members develop towards each other and team leaders within the team. Another theme is the place of the team and training in the lives of the team members. According to the team members, training and their teams are located in the most important part of their lives. In addition, they stated that they love fencing, that they feel good while doing this sport, and that they relieve stress in the team and training. All of these can be considered emotional states that reinforce the climate of gratitude. In the theme of the paradoxical leadership approach, coding was carried out for the attitudes and behaviors of the leader to maintain distance and closeness, to behave individually and to be at an equal distance to everyone, to be self-centered, to exhibit altruism, to recognize autonomy and to retain control, to fulfill job requirements while allowing flexibility, and to give confidence in general.

The experiences shared by the members indicate that the leader's behavior of allowing flexibility and fulfilling the requirements of the job, as well as keeping a distance and being close, have an effect on the emergence of the phenomenon. The findings indicate that the dynamics within the team, which reinforce the sense of gratitude in team members, have a strong interaction with the paradoxical leadership behaviors of team leaders. The findings confirm that the paradoxical understanding of leadership plays a decisive role in the formation of a grateful team climate, and may help professionals in the field of sports management to improve their decision-making processes based on scientific data. Deepening and expanding research in this field should be encouraged. While evaluating the findings of this research, it is important to know the historical process and the difficulties of fencing in terms of fencing. According to the research article titled "The First Article about Sports in the Turkish Press: Ali Ferruh Bey and Fencing" published in 2015, the sport of fencing is based on a historical background dating back to the weapons and martial arts that existed in China before Christ (129). Another study, which includes information about the history of fencing in Turkey and the introduction of this sport into the country, deals with the historical development and spread of fencing in Turkey (130). Although fencing is a safe sport, it requires qualities such as patience, determination, discipline, and competitiveness. Fencing has many positive contributions to development as well as its difficulties. The results of a study conducted on athletes between the ages of 10-12 in the Fencing Branch of Göztepe Sports Club are aimed at the contribution of fencing to the development of attention (131). The offensive and defensive dynamics encountered in fencing are extremely prominent. The rules faced by fencing athletes during the match and the difficulties brought by these rules have been shared in detail by the Fencing Federation of the Republic of Turkey on eskrim.org.tr (132).

In a study published under the title of "Evaluation of psychological factors affecting the performance of fencing athletes according to fencing coaches", psychological factors affecting the performance of fencing athletes were evaluated and the relationship between these factors and the difficulties faced by the athletes was emphasized (133). Based on the literature, it is understood that the fencing athlete should have technical skills, physical condition, mental endurance, psychological resistance to pressure during the match, and a reflex to protect against the risk of injury. The complexity of the rules specific to the sport of fencing is an area

of development that needs to be carefully addressed to understand the referee's decisions for each team member. Fencing competitions are intensely competitive internationally and routine training times are also quite long. In the academic literature, it has been observed that the research conducted directly within the framework of the importance of team climate and leadership in coping with difficulties in fencing has been quite limited. However, there is a large literature showing that the concepts of team climate and leadership are important components of team effectiveness (134). Research on team sports and leadership clearly shows that team climate and leadership are important in all kinds of sports, and therefore potentially in fencing as well. The effect of team climate and leadership practices on team dynamics has also been demonstrated (135). Leadership style is considered to play a decisive role in the management of members from different cultures (136) and in ensuring coordination in the team. Research shows that there is a strong emphasis on the relationship between team effectiveness and leadership (137). According to the results of a study that deals with team cohesion and performance in the context of paradoxical leadership, it has been revealed that paradoxical leadership is an important predictor of team cohesion and performance and that leadership style plays a mediating role in the development of an inclusive climate within the team (138). It has been determined that the mediating role of paradoxical leadership in regulating the positive climate in the team has been explained in different studies (138,139). A study on paradoxical leadership literature has discussed the concept of paradoxical leadership in terms of managing different dynamics and cultures in a team as the paradox of paradoxical leadership (140). The results of the research reveal that the leadership behaviors of coaches can play a critical role in the psychological development, satisfaction, training efficiency, and match results of the athletes. In addition, the effect of leadership style on athletes its relationship with team harmony, and its importance in the formation of a climate of gratitude are emphasized (141). All of these sources show that team climate and leadership style are critical to dealing with challenges in sports teams in general.

The findings of this research can guide fencing coaches and team managers in improving team climate and strengthening leadership skills. All the information conveyed so far contributes to the interpretation and discussion of the findings obtained from this research. The findings supported the view that the paradoxical leadership approach is effective in the formation of a climate of gratitude. It is understood that paradoxical leadership plays a decisive role in managing the expectations of team members, providing them with flexibility and freedom, instilling confidence in team members, and capturing an open communication language. Paradoxical leadership refers to a leadership style in which the leader leads his team by adopting unexpected or contradictory approaches. The findings supported the view that paradoxical leadership increases team members' flexibility, creativity, and adaptability. Among the paradoxical leadership behaviors identified in the research, attitudes and attitudes such as sharing authority and simultaneously holding control, giving independence and guidance to their employees, and maintaining perfectionism standards while allowing them to make mistakes stand out.

The findings of the research are revealing and explanatory of the effect and importance of the mediating role of paradoxical leadership in the creation of a grateful team climate in the context of paradoxical leadership behavior, as presented below, and support the views previously conveyed in the literature. Accordingly;

Paradoxical leaders have a balanced approach between authority and freedom, so they both encourage and guide team members to take responsibility. According to the findings, this created an environment that allowed team members to feel gratitude towards each other and their leaders. A climate of gratitude describes a work environment where team members feel gratitude toward each other and their leaders, positive relationships thrive, and appreciation is openly expressed. A climate of gratitude can have positive effects on job satisfaction, team cohesion, and overall performance.

Fencing athletes working under ever-changing conditions and intense competition are provided with the necessary flexibility to adapt to changing conditions, and this flexibility not only provides motivation for success but also increases the capacity of team members to cope with challenges and continuously improve, which reinforces feelings of gratitude. Rekabet koşullarında belirginleşen çatışma iklimi söz konusu olmaktadır. At this point, the paradoxical leadership approach is of critical value and has led to team members learning to appreciate the contributions of others other than themselves, as it involves bringing together different views and talents by consensus.

Personal support has developed among team members, which has led team members to feel gratitude towards their leaders and teammates.

Although there is a perfectionist attitude towards team goals, the paradoxical leadership approach has encouraged athletes to both surpass themselves and provide an environment for learning and development without fear of making mistakes.

In summary, the findings were interpreted as a multifaceted effect of paradoxical leadership in the sample group that supports the climate of gratitude in sports teams. Leaders' adoption of paradoxical behaviors can improve the overall cohesion and performance of the team by increasing the gratitude of team members to each other and their leaders. Therefore, paradoxical leadership behaviors for sports team managers and coaches are critical to fostering a climate of gratitude within the team. Paradoxical leadership can have an impact on team cohesion, adaptation, and performance, while a climate of gratitude increases the commitment and motivation of team members to each other. According to the findings of the research, it has been concluded that paradoxical leadership attitudes, attitudes, and behaviors have a decisive role in the formation of a grateful team climate. This discussion can provide valuable insights for sports team managers and coaches, guiding them on improving intra-team dynamics and maximizing team success.

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