Does the Olympic Torch Light in Tokyo or on Twitter?

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the social reflections of various social criticism, protest, feelings, and attitudes related to the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. The data of this study were obtained from Twitter which is one of the social media platforms. In this study, MAXQDA (Analytics Pro 2022; VERBI GmbH Berlin, Germany) was used as a digital tool for qualitative studies and data management. In total, the number of tweets collected in English was 100,000, and the tweets collected in Turkish were 92,179. Retweets, replays, tweets that are not posted in the target language, and tweets from illegal betting sites were not included in this analysis. When these tweets were discarded from the study, 44,845 unique tweets in English and 59,013 unique tweets in Turkish were obtained. Sentiment analysis was performed on the English tweets sent across the world. For the tweets posted in Turkish, an inductive method was used and content analysis was performed. Codes, categories, and themes were determined and MAXMaps Single-Case Model (Code Hierarchy) was used from the Visual Tools tab in MAXQDA. As a result of the study, when the sentiment analysis was examined, it was seen that socially, individuals developed positive feelings towards sports activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. When Turkey's attitudes towards the Tokyo Olympics were evaluated, supportive and flattering statements were made to the successful athletes and the branches in which achievements were obtained. It was mentioned that accurate education and goals are prerequisites for success, and it is enjoyable to watch different sports branches. Also, it was stated that the existence of prejudices based on religious, political, and cultural values is the biggest obstacle to the development of sports and athletes.
Keywords: Tokyo Olympics, Twitter, Qualitative Analysis

Olimpiyat Meşalesi Tokyo'da mı Yoksa Twitter'da mı Yanıyor?

Özet

Bu araştırma, 2021 Tokyo Olimpiyatları ile ilgili çeşitli toplumsal eleştiri, protesto, duygu ve tutumların sosyolojik olarak yansımalarını incelemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Bu araştırmanın verileri sosyal medya platformlarından biri olan Twitterdan alınmıştır. Bu araştırmada dijital araç olarak kalitatif çalışmalar ve veri yönetimi için MAXQDA (Analytics Pro 2022; VERBI GmbH Berlin, Almanya) kullanılmıştır. İngilizce atılan tweetlerin sayısı toplamda 100.000 olmakla birlikte Türkçe atılan tweet sayısı 92.179 olmuştur. Retweet, replay, hedef dilde atılmayan ve yasa dışı bahis sitelerinden atılan tweetler analize dahil edilmemiştir. Dahil edilmeyen tweetlerden sonra 44.845 İngilizce ve 59.013 Türkçe benzersiz tweet elde edilmiştir. Dünya genelinde atılan İngilizce tweetler için duygu analizi yapılmıştır. Türkçe atılan tweetler için ise Tümevarımsal bir yöntem kullanılmıştır ve içerik analizi yapılmıştır. Kodlar, kategoriler ve temalar belirlenerek Maxqda Visual Tools sekmesinden MAXMaps Single-Case Model (Code Hierarchy) kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda duygu analizi incelendiğinde Covid-19 sürecinde toplumsal olarak bireylerin spor faaliyetlerine karşı olumlu duygu geliştirdikleri görülmüştür. Türkiye'nin Tokyo Olimpiyatlarına karşı tutumları değerlendirildiğinde, başarı elde edilen branşlara ve sporculara karşı destekleyici, övgü dolu ifadeler yer almıştır. Doğru eğitim ve hedeflerin başarının ön koşullarından biri olduğundan, farklı spor branşlarını izlemenin keyif verici olduğundan bahsedilmiştir. Dini, politik, kültürel değerlere dayalı önyargıların varlığının ise spor ve sporcuların gelişiminin önündeki en büyük engel olduğundan bahsedilmiştir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Tokyo Olimpiyatları, Twitter, Nitel Analiz

INTRODUCTION

The modern Olympic games have taken their place in our lives with the Athens Olympics held in 1896. The French baron Pierre de Coubertin has assumed the leading role of modernizing the Olympics held during the Ancient Greek period and bringing them to the present day. The Olympic games are an integral and effective part of the sports world because the Olympics are based on ideological, structural, organizational, social, ethical, economic, and political complexity (Giulianotti et al., 2015). For this reason, Olympic Games, for many athletes, are the nirvana of athletic success (Gould & Maynard, 2009).

All sports organizations scheduled to be held in 2020, were postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic which spread from Wuhan, China to all over the world on December 15, 2019, and brought live to a standstill. Although the organization of the postponed 2020 Olympic Games (July-August 2021) caused concerns due to the Covid-19 outbreak, it was carried out in a controlled manner by taking strict public health policies and measures. As a result of the efforts of the Japanese government and people, the Tokyo Olympics was completed safely with the assistance of the International Olympic Committee (Dergaa et al., 2022).

Viewers have kept up with the follow-ups of mega sports events such as the Olympic Games via social media platforms such as Twitter (Yan et al., 2019). The most important feature of these platforms is that they instantly connect millions of people to each other and make sharings easily accessible to a wide audience (Adá-Lameiras & Rodríguez-Castro, 2023; Kwak et al., 2010). In this context, it is thought that the evaluation of the data in which the viewers completely share their own emotional states, with content analysis adds value to the studies (Avcı et al., 2023).

There are limited studies in the literature that comprehensively examine positive and negative public reactions to largely commoditized mega-sports organizations such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup. It seems that only the short-term effects of the Olympic games have been studied in the literature. To study long-term effects, more comprehensive and longer-term data acquisition is required. This study has revealed all the critical reactions that have appeared on the social media platform with reference to the Olympic games. In the studies of Condeço-Melhorado et al. (2020) conducted on the Rio Olympics, it was stated that including Twitter sentiment analysis will enrich the study (Condeço-Melhorado et al., 2020). Based on these suggestions, the researchers considered it appropriate to include sentiment analysis and content analysis. The effects of a sociologically based reaction were discussed in this study. The model created in the study also allows it to be examined the distinctive events that are beyond sports (Avcı et al., 2023; Giulianotti et al., 2015).

This study was conducted to examine the social reflections of various social criticism, protest, feelings, and attitudes related to the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. In accordance with this purpose, the hypotheses of the study are; (i) Tweets in English sent from all around the world contain positive emotions in direct proportion to the interest in the Olympics, (ii) Olympic viewers using Twitter sincerely expressed their feelings in the tweets they posted, (iii) The Olympics have a much deeper meaning for society rather than sports activities.

METHODS

Study Overview

The data of this study were obtained via Twitter. Twitter is a very active microblog platform used by individuals and businesses. Twitter has been preferred for our research because it is a popular interaction platform (Khasawneh et al., 2020).

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted as an observational study with publicly available data. The study data have been taken from the publicly accessible World Athletics official website (worldathletics.org). The study data are not of ethical concern because they can be accessed online in an unprocessed format and the data are not collected through experiments, as stated by Morley and Thomas (2005).

The 32nd Summer Olympic Games were held in Tokyo, the capital of Japan, between July 23rd and August 8th, 2021. Data used in our study were taken from Twitter between July 23rd and August 8th, 2021. Tweets in English sent from all over the world as well as tweets in Turkish sent from Turkey were transferred to the data analysis program. Sentiment analysis was performed on the English tweets in which retweets and replays were not included. Content analysis was performed for the analysis of Turkish data. The included tweets were evaluated by an inductive method.

Data Collection Tool

In this study, MAXQDA (Analytics Pro 2022; VERBI GmbH Berlin, Germany) was used as a digital tool for qualitative studies and data management. MAXQDA allows users to transfer tweets to the system by scanning hashtags and keywords. Since the import function in MAXQDA does not allow importing tweets older than one week and no more than 10,000 tweets per day can be received, data were collected for 11 days with the hashtags #OlimpiadeTokyo2020, #TokyoOlympics, #OlimpiyatOyunları.

In total, the number of tweets in English on the specified date was 100,000, while the tweets in Turkish were 92,179. Retweets, replays, tweets that are not posted in the target language, and tweets from illegal betting sites were not included in this analysis. When these tweets were discarded from the study, 44,845 unique tweets in English and 59,013 unique tweets in Turkish were obtained.

Data Analysis

Twitter has been preferred in our study for its popularity among social media platforms and is easy to access. The tweets sent were transferred to the system for 11 days. Sentiment analysis was performed on the data collected in English. On the other hand, 4,013 tweets in Turkish were examined in detail together with field experts, and content analysis was performed using the induction method (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The preference of this number is related to data saturation. Coding was continued until no new codes were added. The newly added data tends to be more than the previously collected data. When researchers start reading constantly repetitive data, it means that data saturation has been acquired (Grady 1998; Saunders et al., 2018). Looking at the final framework, the lead author initially read the first 1000 tweets for a

month and conducted a pilot scheme by encodings. After constituting the coding framework, an online meeting was held with other field specialist authors and the coding was discussed. After the encodings were clarified, the encodings were carried out by the authors separately and together. Following the completion of the coding, categories and themes were determined and MAXMaps Single-Case Model (Code Hierarchy) was used from the Visual Tools tab in MAXQDA. The frequency values of the analyses are graphed and explained in the findings section of the study. It took about six months for all transcriptions to be evaluated by field specialists and finalized.

Table 1. Tweets in English and Turkish posted by Twitter users about the Tokyo Olympics

Tweets in Turkish	
(Tweets 2001-3000, Column: 2 | Row : 871)	The National Women's Volleyball Team defeated the last Olympic Champion China 3-0. After the victory, TRT Sports cut off the broadcast at the moment when the Izmir Anthem was played in Tokyo. Do not forget what you did TRT management... sure someone will come out to bring you into line!
(Tweets 3001-4000, Column: 2 | Row: 205)	Since the country of 80 million people has seen one Olympic game in a century in team sports, the support behind the teams that achieve this can quickly turn into a curse. Everyone has suddenly turned into a volleyball fanatic. Both wins and losses are exaggerated. We need to calm down a little.
(Tweets 3001-4000, Column: 2 | Row: 552)	My request from the sensitive scholars who address the daughter of Islam is that they address the men of Islam once and advise them not to kill women. The women's team will be at least the Olympic champions. Today we have a match against Italy. Let's watch it without getting stuck in shorts. Prayers can be done for protection from the evil eye.
(Tweets 3001-4000, Column: 2 | Row: 560)	What does the "National Olympic Committee" do? For example... (I looked into its duties on its website or on the Internet) I am asking about its success and its contribution to Turkish sports: Is there any athlete who is supported? □ Are there any Olympics organized? □So to say, the state is an ocean full of money...☺
(Tweets 1001 -2000, Column: 2 | Row: 539)	Of course, we will fail at the Olympics, you are not watching? You do not care about it... Ok, you watch volleyball and basketball matches of the national team, but do you watch the gymnastics national team? For example, have you ever watched athletics except for the Olympics? There is no budget for these sports branches because we do not watch. Sports are not valued in our country.
Sentiment Analysis in English Tweets	
Slightly Negative	In a survey conducted in Russia, 97% of the public could not even name one of their athletes who participated in the Olympics. Only 1%, said high jumper Mariya Lasitskene.
Positive	The fact that the Olympic Games have such a deep-rooted tradition and history, is the sharpest indication that sports culture is not just about playing games. As civilization develops, the nature and social importance of such organizations increase in parallel with this.
Negative	Visually and hearing-impaired swimmer Becca Meyers announced that she had to withdraw from the Tokyo Paralympic Olympics, where she was preparing for a medal, due to the lack of auxiliary staff provided to her by the US National Olympic Committee. It's really embarrassing.

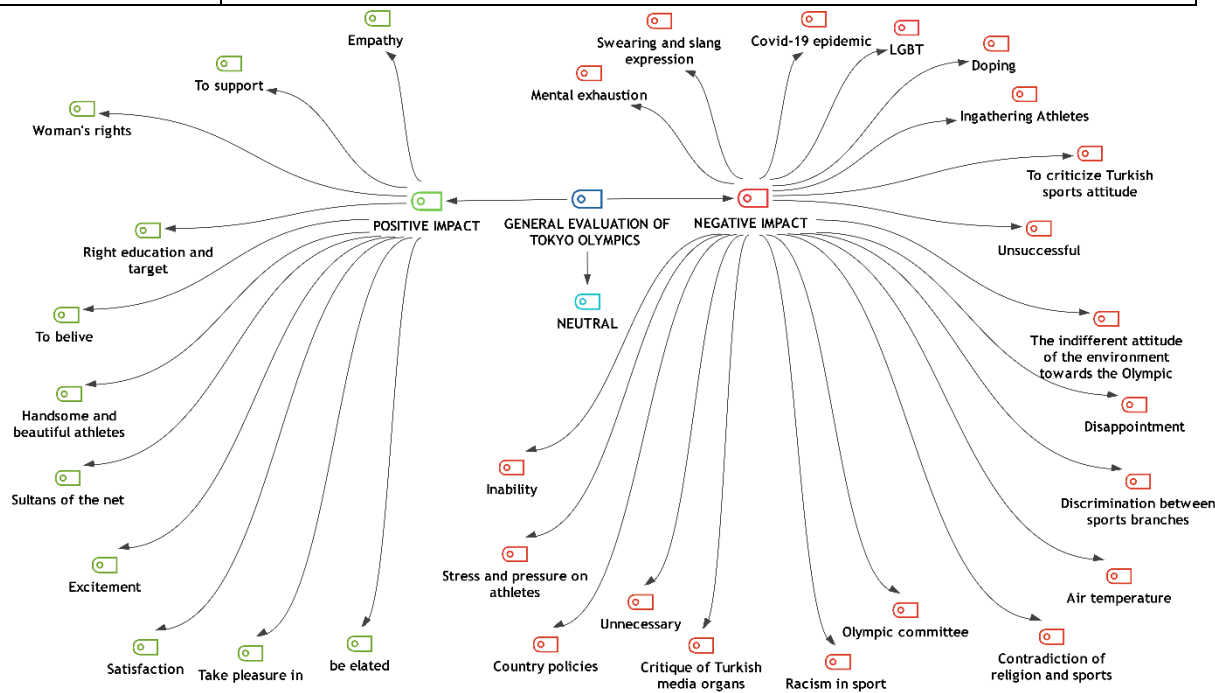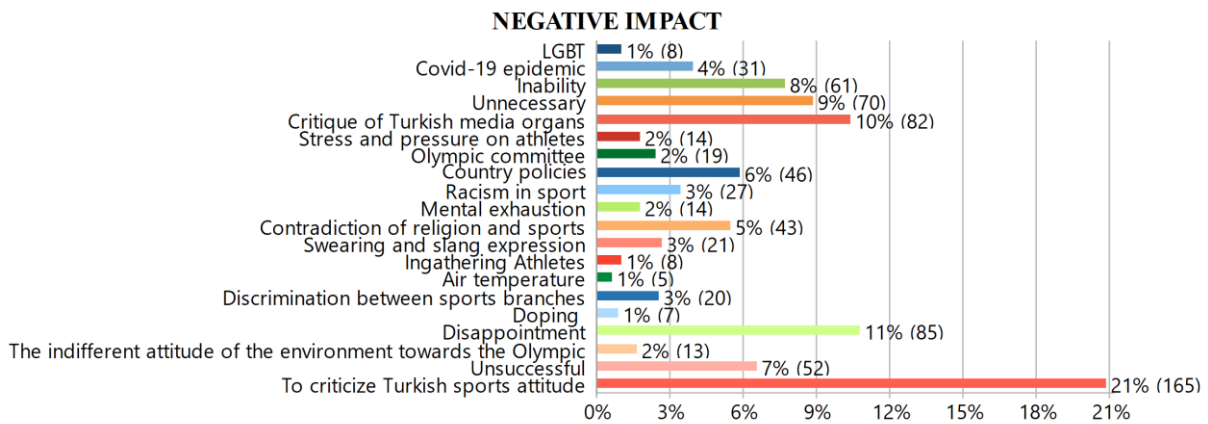| Neutral	Nendo's design. This torch burns with Hydrogen. Hydrogen was obtained by electrolyzing water using solar energy at a plant in Fukushima. This is known as green Hydrogen. The Tokyo Olympics torch was the first Olympic torch in which Hydrogen is used in this sense.

Figure 1. The general analysis visual of the general evaluation of the Tokyo Olympics theme, categories, and codes

The general evaluation of the Tokyo Olympics theme consists of 31 codes and three categories: positive impact, negative impact, and neutral.
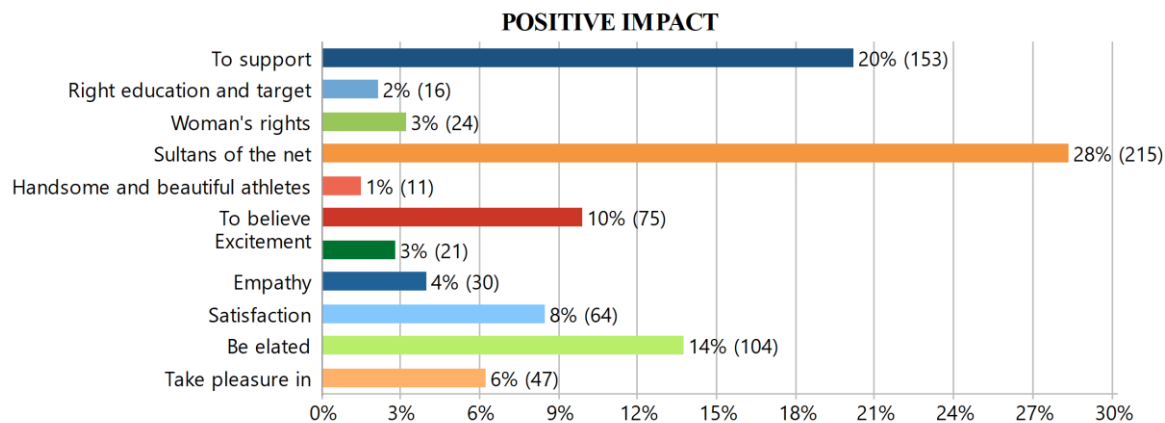
Graphic 1. Hierarchical code-subcode model effects on academic development category frequency analysis chart

When the graph of the positive impact category is examined, it can be seen that the codes of the tweets sent by the participants and the frequency values indicating how often they are expressed are included. The codes to support, right education and target, woman's rights, sultans of the net, handsome and beautiful athletes, to believe, excitement, empathy, satisfaction, be elated and take pleasure in are shown.

NEGATIVE IMPACT

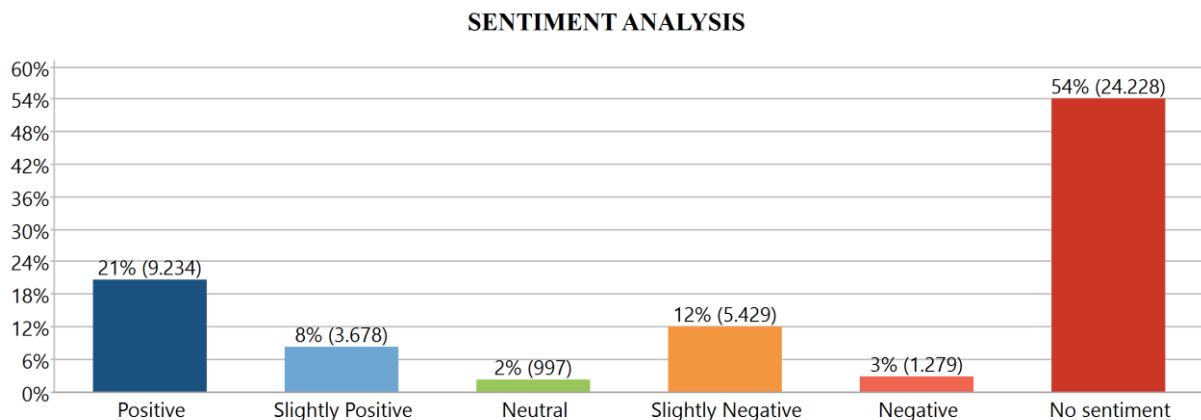| Code	Value
LGBT	1% (8)
Covid-19 epidemic	4% (31)
Inability	8% (61)
Unnecessary	9% (70)
Critique of Turkish media organs	10% (82)
Stress and pressure on athletes	2% (14)
Olympic committee	2% (19)
Country policies	6% (46)
Racism in sport	3% (27)
Mental exhaustion	2% (14)
Contradiction of religion and sports	5% (43)
Swearing and slang expression	3% (21)
Ingathering Athletes	1% (8)
Air temperature	1% (5)
Discrimination between sports branches	3% (20)
Doping	1% (7)
Disappointment	11% (85)
The indifferent attitude of the environment towards the Olympic	2% (13)
Unsuccessful	7% (52)
To criticize Turkish sports attitude	21% (165)

Graphic 2 Hierarchical code-subcode model effects on academic development category frequency analysis chart

When the graph of the negative impact category is examined, it can be seen that the codes of the tweets sent by the participants and the frequency values indicating how often they are expressed are included. LGBT, Covid-19 epidemic, inability, unnecessary, critique of Turkish media organs, stress and pressure on athletes, Olympic committee, country policies, racism in sport, mental exhaustion, contradiction of religion and sport, swearing and slang expression, ingathering athletes, air temperature, discrimination between sports branches, doping, disappointment, the indifferent attitude of the environment towards the Olympic, unsuccessful, to criticize Turkish sports attitude codes are shown.

SENTIMENT ANALYSIS

Category	Value
Positive	21% (9.234)
Slightly Positive	8% (3.678)
Neutral	2% (997)
Slightly Negative	12% (5.429)
Negative	3% (1.279)
No sentiment	54% (24.228)

Graphic 3. Sentiment Analysis

As can be seen from Chart 3, because of the sentiment analysis conducted, tweets containing 21% (9,234) Positive, 8% (3,678) Slightly Positive, 2% (997) Neutral, 3% (1,279) Negative, and 12% (5,429) Slightly Negative feelings were discarded by Tokyo Olympiad audience about the series. A total of 44,845 tweets were included in the study.

DISCUSSION

Mega events are defined as organizations that attract a vast number of visitors to the relevant city, are accessible, high-cost, and have a major impact on the redesigned environment and population (Condeço-Melhorado et al., 2020). When the literature is examined, the importance of sports, cultural or political mega-events is considered from different angles. A

large percentage of the research, examining the relationship of sports media with online spaces, has focused on websites and sports blogs (Eagleman et al., 2014). Current studies have now left the traditional environment behind and turned to trending social networks. In this context, researchers have turned to the current one while examining the Tokyo Olympics.

In this study, where the general evaluation of the Tokyo Olympics was conducted, sentiment analysis was performed on the tweets sent in English around the world. These organizations, which are held every four years, are mega events that are followed with importance for successful countries in sports. Audiences have mentioned that they watched an enjoyable Olympics despite the Covid-19 cases. They expressed that the Olympic games cheered them up during this period and it was flattering that they supported the medal joy of their athletes competing on behalf of their country from the screen. Some Twitter users have criticized the fact that the names of the athletes participating in the Olympic games are not known. And some have expressed their reactions for not providing necessary help to the paralympic athletes. Since the tweets of news sites are treated as neutral, it is seen that their rates are high on the chart. When the tweets with negative content are examined, it is seen that the decrease in performance of the athletes infected with the Covid-19 virus, and the measures that are not being handled meticulously are criticized.

When the tweets sent in Turkish are examined, it is noteworthy that there are criticisms in many areas besides the organization. While there is a state of satisfaction, excitement, and pride in the audience in the branches where success has been achieved (Chart 1), the obstacles to success have also been mentioned (Chart 2).

The posts of women athletes on social media have the attribute to both empower and oppress women (Litchfield & Kavanagh, 2019; Bruce, 2016). Participation in sports organizations is now an expected and valued activity for women in many countries. Today, very few people accept the opinion expressed by Baron de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games, that "women should not soil the Olympic Games with their sweat" (Pfister et al., 2004). The fact that Busenaz Surmeneli is both the World and Olympic champion in the boxing branch has been welcomed with pride in our country. Our women's volleyball team, which perfectly represents our country in the world with the title of "Sultans of the Net", has been a source of pride for many viewers. However, when the tweets are examined, it is seen that the attitudes of Turks towards sports are heavily scrutinized. The fact that our national women's volleyball team defeated the last Olympic champion- China- with a distinct score of 3-0 had great repercussions in our country. So much so that the unbalanced attitudes experienced over the heavy criticism towards the national team who were defeated by Italy, by the audience, who were by the way happy as if they were Olympic champions caused heavy criticism. It is thought that all these events have caused stress and pressure on our national athletes. In addition, the discriminatory attitude of the state channel towards national values (the cut-off of the broadcast during the recitation of the Izmir anthem after the volleyball match) was expressed by the audience, who made a negative assessment of the attitude of the country's policies towards both sports activities and female athletes (Chart 2). However, gender apartheid, unfortunately, continues to have an impact in Turkey as well as in different countries. The adverseness of the conservative section to female athletes is being talked about more than our Olympic achievements. The idea that athletes with different sexual

orientations are being socially rejected, that the clothes of women athletes evoke sexuality, and that the natural disasters that occurred are caused by this situation has led to indignation on Twitter. In addition to positive comments defending women's rights in the face of the achievements of our female athletes, there are also sexist tweets sent by the conservative section that their clothes evoke sexuality and that the achievements of male athletes should be talked about.

Watching this sports festival, which is eagerly awaited by Olympic audiences, is seen as a pleasant activity. Statistics are presented that indicate the impact of these sports events on the popular consciousness of people all over the contemporary world (Tomlinson, 1996). Audiences in our country have mentioned the disappointment they experienced when they preferred local channels to watch the Olympics. The fact that the presenters could not satisfactorily narrate the Olympic program to the audience caused an uncomfortable attitude to emerge. According to tweets posted on Twitter, Turkey has been criticized for the low number of medals won at the Olympics despite the presence of a large young population and for the disinterested attitude of the Turkish people towards large sports organizations involving other sports branches other than football. For the Olympic audience, including visuals and comments belonging only to certain branches on the screens discomforted the audience. The necessity of transmitting the news about all of our athletes participating in the Olympics is also among the comments. Due to the time difference between the countries, the viewers stated that they had difficulty following the competitions.

Visually and hearing impaired swimmer Becca Meyers announced that she had to withdraw from the Tokyo Paralympic Olympics due to the lack of auxiliary staff provided to her by the US National Olympic Committee. *"In 2018, she won five gold medals at the Pan Pacific Para Swimming Championships held in Cairns, Australia. In 2019, at the World Para Swimming Championship held in London, she won four medals, the eighth and ninth of her career, and set two world records"*. Taking away the dreams of the athlete, who introduced her identity to the world with such a sports talent, was also reacted against by the Turkish audience.

The presence of ingathering athletes participating in the Olympic games has also caused colonialism discussions. It has been stated that the Turkish Olympic Committee remains passive in terms of educating athletes and earning success in our country. While sports should be an important area of activity in mental and physical development, it has been criticized for being a mega exploitation, being turned into a climate of oppression and gender apartheid. Integrating politics and religious belief into sports has taken its place among the main topics of the tweets (Kılınçarslan et al., 2021).

US gymnast Simone Biles' withdrawal from the competition after the team gymnastics competition stating that she wanted to focus on her mental health as a result of their defeat against Russia made the audience approach the athletes representing their country with empathy. It is seen in the research data that the audience's reactions shown in the defeats of athletes competing in the Olympics for Turkey, sayings about their private lives and athlete personalities cause athletes to experience mental exhaustion.

The Olympics is like a philosophy of life; it tries to create a way of life by glorifying its qualities in a balanced whole, uniting differences around one purpose, combining sports with

culture, art, body, will, perseverance, mind, education (Malfas et al., 2004). It is seen as a result of the research conducted that while doing this, it is not only a sports festival, but also affects societies socially, politically, economically, and culturally. In fact, the Olympic games refer to the structure that glorifies peaceful and performance-based struggle over nationalist values (Reid, 2006).

As a result of the study, when the sentiment analysis was examined, it was seen that socially, individuals developed positive feelings towards sports activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. When Turkey's attitudes towards the Tokyo Olympics were evaluated, supportive and flattering statements were made to the successful athletes and the branches in which achievements were obtained. It was mentioned that right education and goals are prerequisites for success, and it is enjoyable to watch different sports branches. It is thought that the mental health of the athletes representing their countries should be taken into account as well as their physical strength, and in this context, social media users should use more constructive language by approaching athletes empathetically. Also, it was stated that the existence of prejudices based on religious, political, and cultural values is the biggest obstacle to the development of sports and athletes. It can be stated that it is not the right attitude to apply psychological pressure in athletes' defeats while celebrating their victories.

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