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Extreme Sport Participation as Serious Leisure: A Phenomenological Perspective

Özge Yavaş¹ 

¹Mardin Artuklu University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Mardin-Türkiye, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1948-1620>, ozgeyavas@hotmail.com.tr

✉ Corresponding Author: ozgeyavas@hotmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Game... The beginning of defining sports and distinguishing them from extreme and non-extreme sports is the concept of game. Let's assume that we accept the beginning of everything that belongs to humans on earth as game. Let's combine the concept of extreme sports under the roof of game and position it in the right places. Thus, we can find the chance to reach the essence of the concept of extreme sports. Narrowing the boundaries of this broad concept and touching on the overlooked points will change the perspective on the concept of extreme sports and extreme sports participants. In this study, the basic principles, key concepts and perspectives on the experiences of the participants regarding extreme sports will be presented. At the same time, the study is an introductory study that offers an in-depth and comprehensive perspective on serious leisure activities. In the study, the nature and function of extreme sports were tried to be explained starting from the birth of extreme sports. At the same time, a phenomenological approach was used in one part of the study to investigate the meanings of the experiences of people involved in extreme sports. In this context, the results of semi-structured interviews conducted with extreme sports participants were included in the study. The study draws on interviews with 31 extreme sports participants (25 Male, 6 Female) from around the world who volunteered for the study, revealing 5 unique themes: identity and commitment, defining boundaries, risk, feelings of accomplishment and personal insight, extraordinary experiences similar to Maslow's peak experiences. The findings provide valuable insight into the participants' experiences. At this point, this study serves as a conceptual and experiential guide for scientists working in the field of serious leisure participation, recreation, and extreme sports.

Keywords: Serious leisure, extreme sports, phenomenology, recreation

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INTRODUCTION

Is there a limit to the mind and body? Constantly challenging our body and always wanting to reach further..., Maybe it is not only peculiar to human beings, but the absolute truth in all living creatures is to challenge the limits. This is a great way for people to realize and develop themselves. Each obstacle overcome or each peak reached prepares you for the next stage. As limits are overcome, the body and mind begins a process of development. We feel very close to the things that we have difficulty even imagining that we can do as human beings. Because now we have exceeded those limits and we

realize that the limits are only in our minds. Somehow, when we think of extreme, we always think of crazy things, like dropping from a tall building, walking on a tightrope, or throwing yourself out of an airplane. Indeed, these are crazy things, but not all of them should be considered extreme. Because extreme behavior and extreme sports are different. This difference is related to how things are done. However, like extreme sports, every sport involves a degree of risk, and if you don't have enough experience in the sport you are practicing, this degree of risk increases multiplicatively. In fact, what needs to be emphasized here is not whether or not the activity involves risk, but that it is an experience process related to individuals knowing what to do and how to do it and

feeling safe by receiving the necessary training. In this respect, the perception that only "extreme sports are risky and dangerous" is incorrect. This perception simplifies the concept of extreme sport and categorically excludes what extreme sport actually means. In this respect, it is necessary to question what the concept of extreme sport actually means and whether the definition is "associated with risk taking resulting in a high risk of injury or death". This raises the question of whether extreme sport and extreme sport participants have characteristics that distinguish them from other alternative sports (Cohen, Baluch, & Duffy, 2018).

This lack of consistency attributed to the concept of extreme sport causes researchers who study or want to study this field to create their own criteria. This situation reveals the fact that they try to draw the boundaries of extreme sport categories in a forced manner. However, it means that researchers who are interested in this field and find themselves in the mess of studies in the literature as a starting point will have difficulty in forming something in their minds about the concept of extreme sports and extreme sports participants. At this point, the study emphasizes the need for a new definition and categorization of extreme sports and extreme sports participants. Starting from the emergence of the concept of extreme sports, the study systematically examined the characteristics of this concept and participants, and keywords. It is thought that this study will fill the gap in the literature on the concept of extreme sports and offer a different perspective to researchers.

What is Extreme ?

What is the criteria for something to be considered extreme? According to Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, the word extreme is defined as exceeding the ordinary, usual or expected; very high degrees; magic or exaggerated lengths. Based on this definition, we can elaborate on the criteria for the word extreme. The word extreme has been defined in various ways as extraordinary, above what is expected, customary or ordinary; above what exists to a very high degree; prohibitions, wilderness and spatial dimensions; a deviation beyond what is seen as normal or conventional activity; meeting multiplicity in speed, height, depth, distance and duration (Cohen, Baluch, & Duffy, 2018). That is, it is assumed that the word "extreme" in extreme sports is a deviation beyond what is seen as "normal" or "traditional" and that participants are interested in things beyond these boundaries (Cohen, Baluch, & Duffy, 2018). In an interview on this topic, Professional Base Jumper Moledzki J: "The word extreme has been misused for the last 20 years. I think it comes from the idea that these sports actually involve rebelling against authority and trying the impossible" (O'Neil, 2017).

The Birth of Extreme Sports Concept

This may seem strange to us if we think that the beginning of everything that belongs to human beings on earth is game. The handling of the concept of game has led to the emergence of different perspectives. At this point, Johan

Huizinga's work *Homo Ludens* constitutes an important place for "game and human".

According to Huizinga, the game is a fundamental characteristic of human beings and is a serious action. This In the Age of Enlightenment, when it was revealed that human beings were not as intelligent as the concept of "homo sapiens", it was believed that the concept of "homo faber" would be more appropriate for human beings. Huizinga, who believed that civilization came out of the game, opposed the other belief in this respect and rejected both concepts and came up with the concept of "homo ludens" (playful man) (Huizinga, 1995).

According to Huizinga, "there is no formal difference between a game and a sacred act". That is, the sacred act is performed under the same forms as the game. Religious rituals, consecration, sacrifice, ritual dance, music and competitions, representations, rites, masks are all forms of games (Caillois, 1961; Huizinga, 1995).

What is the relationship between extreme sports and a game or a sacred act? Every game and sacred act has certain rules and ways of doing things. Extreme sports actually reflect a certain culture. They also have their own rituals, initiation and rites of passage, meetings and so on. These can be similar, different and diverse according to extreme sports. For example, skydiving... It is not so easy to be included among the people who practice this extreme sport. Admission to a skydiving community is ritually marked by parades. These role transitions are experiential. It is celebrated in a ritual way. When you are accepted into the community you accept that you have to participate and perform important rituals. The most important rituals in this community are the first night jump, first water jump, 12-hour free parachute badge, 1000th jump. A ritual that is open to everyone is the honoring ritual where novices make their first jump. The first jump, the honoring ritual, is usually an initiation ceremony attended by friends and relatives. This ritual ceremony of the first jump is concluded with the words of the novices (Laurendeau, 2000).

After Huizinga's definition of game, Caillois (1961) re-categorized the game. Caillois categorized the game into 4 categories: agon, alea, mimicry and vertigo. "Vertigo", which is among Caillois' categories of play, is used for games that create a "spinning feeling" derived from the Greek term 'ilinx'. The aim of these games is to momentarily disrupt one's equilibrium and create a pleasurable sense of panic and confusion. Almost every child spins around and while this movement causes dizziness and loss of balance, the child enjoys it. Such games are also common in the animal kingdom, especially in birds. Birds especially like vertigo games. Birds have the sensation of going very high and not opening their wings until the last moment by giving in to gravity and opening their wings as close as possible to the impact and experiencing a free parachute jump.

The American nightjar is a master of these impressive acrobatics. Examples include dogs spinning until they fall to catch their tails, or water rats twisting themselves in a stream as if they were being pulled by a whirlpool (Caillois, 1961).

Based on the idea that more powerful machines needed to be invented for these vertigo games, which gave people and animals a sense of excitement and pleasure, the "first amusement park" was established after the Industrial Revolution, First Amusement Park, New York/Brooklyn, 1903. Rather than the establishment of such parks, it is necessary to observe people getting off these machines that create a feeling of vertigo.

These machines create nausea and dizziness in individuals due to their rotation, speed, shaking, etc. features. Although individuals experience things such as screaming with fear, gasping for breath, vomiting in these machines, they queue up at the ticket office to buy the right to experience the same pleasure and torture again before they come to their senses. This is the shock effect experienced by the individual, a feeling of pleasure arising from dizziness (Cailliois, 1961).

The feeling of vertigo, the starting point of vertigo games was the concept of game by Cailliois (1961). After the classification of game, the concept was grounded in the study conducted by Kenyon (1968). In his study, Kenyon tried to develop a multidimensional measurement tool to determine the attitude towards physical activity and as a result of the research, he revealed 6 dimensions: a social experience, vertigo seeking, an aesthetic experience, catharsis, and an ascetic experience.

Vertigo is a type of dizziness and is defined as "the sensation of movement independent of gravity" (Kenyon, 1968), while vertigo games are defined as an experience that includes elements of risk and excitement achieved by turning upside down and at the same time speeding, accelerating, changing direction and/or being exposed to dangerous situations without losing control (Self et al., 2006). Farmer (1992) described such experiences as "high" and possibly something dizzying, such as "self-transcending" and "self-losing". Later the concept was replaced by the term "extreme sports" in the popular nomenclature.

What is Extreme Sport? Difficulty of Definition

In the literature, both "high risk" and "extreme sport" are defined as "any sport with a risk component in which a person must accept the possibility of serious injury or death as part of the activity" and "extreme sport" is often used interchangeably with "high risk sport" (Cronin, 1991; Gomai Freixanet, 1991; Breivik et al., 1994; Wagner and Houlihan, 1994). How did this concept gain widespread use? Extreme sports, which have their roots in the 1960s, have become a sport that has rapidly increased in popularity, especially with the X Games Games, which emerged in parallel with the Modern Olympic Games. More than 500 players from 20 different countries participated in the X-Games Games, which were held for the first time in 1997.

The term extreme was used by media and marketing companies to attract the attention of the participants, especially in these games where young people called the Y generation participated. This concept, which is used in an effort to increase sales, has caused not only extreme sports

but also all forms of alternative sports to be questioned as suspicious (Watson & Parker, 2015; Wheaton, 2004). Baudry (1991) states that extreme sports are paradoxical (against logic) in nature. Because such attempts are like a pre-planned suicide strategy, deliberately choosing to go to death.

Similarly, Booker (1998) stated that "extreme sports" are beyond the limit of moderation and that individuals practicing such sports act against logic and have a desire to reach what is found in the farthest places. In other words, extreme sports are dangerous, irregular, and violate laws and safety regulations (Cohen, Baluch, & Duffy, 2018). By including excerpts from interviews on the concept of extreme sports, it is necessary to evaluate first-person perspectives on the concept.

Wingsuit jumper McDougall: "I prefer to use the term 'adventure sport' rather than 'extreme sport' because it's always been more appealing to me to say that you're going on a 'cool' adventure for every jump experience. No white lines, no marker posts, no rules, just pure adventure. I don't think that the sport I practice is extreme; on the contrary, I think it's something that gives me the opportunity to travel to incredible places all over the world and fulfill my dreams." he expressed his feelings by making a statement. Wingsuit founder MacCartney: I think the concept of "extreme sport" is used incorrectly. Because these things performed are not always «sports».

Additionally, since the things carried out are high risk, they do not fall under that category. This is partly related to the risk perceived by the individual. This term is often used in marketing and by the media. Generally, these strategies are applied on the target audience. Because what we can define as true 'extreme sports' is a non-traditional, authority-rejecting, anti-establishment, unapologetic lifestyle". American Rock climbing, Base-jumping, legendary man Caylor; "Extreme sports, in my opinion, are sports where the consequences of failure are spectacular (and often graphic) injury or death." He put forward a different perspective.

Professional extreme sports photographer Kontizas: *"Extreme sports are anything that is too dangerous for many people to practice. For me, the definition of extreme sports is rushing. Finding yourself with your eyes open, feeling your heart beating fast, your mind clouding, and above all, your body... thinking you are in a different place. It is as if death is on your side and you are relying on your abilities to escape it. You can do this by knowing your own limits. The scariest part is that when individuals think they are indestructible, their lives end."* He revealed to us that the concept of extreme sports is not a simple thing that we need to think about once again (O'Neil, 2017).

The concept of rush, which is stated by Kontizas, a professional extreme sports participant, is a special concept, and this concept was first introduced by Buckey (2012) and discussed by Tez (2023) and a measurement tool for extreme sports participants was developed. According to the Oxford Dictionary, extreme sport is defined as "sports that are

practiced in a dangerous environment and involve great risk". Thus, the concept of "going beyond normal limits" and "risk" seems to be an integral part of what constitutes extreme sport. Brymer and Oades (2009) think that extreme sport is not about the phrase "risk", but about the experience of approaching danger. A somewhat provocative statement came from Slinger and Rudestam (1997), who cited extreme sport as an expression of a death wish. Extreme sport has also been seen as the opposite of "normal" behavior, which seeks safety in general and avoids high risk (Fletcher, 2004).

When all the definitions and explanations about extreme sports in the literature and based on the interview are evaluated, we can say that the concept of extreme sports as common components are: going beyond the norm that is reasonably accepted, acting outside the usual or ordinary, acting contrary to logic, wanting to approach danger, things that involve the risk of serious injury or death, accepting death and the desire to die. At this point, it is necessary to

question what exactly the concept equivalent of «extreme sport» is and whether there are additional aspects that need to be taken into account.

Are Extreme Sports the Same as High-Risk and Adventure Sports ?

If extreme sports are considered to be the same as high-risk and adventure sports, then this leads to the assumption that people practicing extreme sports are at greater risk of injury or death than people practicing high-risk and adventure sports. However, when you examine the available statistics on extreme sport, you are confronted with the fact that this is not the case at all, which once again highlights the contradiction between extreme sport and high-risk and adventure sport. In this respect, I think that evaluating the similarities and differences of these concepts will bring us closer to the meaning of the concept of extreme sports.

Table 1. Definition of adventure sports, high-risk sports, and extreme sports (Cohen, Baluch & Duffy, 2018)

Adventure sports	It is divided into soft and hard adventure and is a concept mostly used by holiday organizers and advertising companies. Since this concept creates a perception of excitement and fun in the individual, it encourages holidaymakers to experience experiences such as risk, danger, challenge and adrenaline.	
High-risk sports	These are combat-based sports that include risks and dangers in which participants interact with nature in an untouched environment or are carried out in a structured environment.	
Extreme sports	They are defined as activities in which the participant is exposed to natural or unusual physical and mental challenges such as speed, height, depth or natural forces.	

High risk activities are often referred to as "adventure sports". However, it is not a correct approach to evaluate these sports under the category of "extreme sports" due to their "high risk"

content. However, in the table below, a comparison is made regarding the characteristics of adventure and high-risk sports and extreme sports.

Table 2. Adventure sports, high-risk sports, extreme sports characteristics (Buckley, 2018).

Characteristics	Adventure-High risk sports	Extreme sports
Service	Yes, The Service Can Be Purchased As A Tour Customer Or Individually	Independent. It Can Only Be Carried Out By People With High Education And Experience.
Equipment	Personal Or Rented	Personal, Special Equipment
Skills	From Low (Tour) To Medium (Individual).	World-Class, Very Advanced
Focus And Concentration	Medium And Intermittent	Intense And Continuous
Consequences of a Mistake	A Possible Injury	Probably Immediate Death
Probability of Death	If Unlucky, Death	Miracle And Luck Are Needed To Survive
Attitude towards Death	Absolutely Negative, No Expectation Of Death	Living Life To The Fullest And Ready To Die

The interchangeability of the concepts of extreme sports and adventure sports and high-risk sports in the literature causes researchers to put these sports under a forced category. At this point, the researchers' placement of these sports under the correct categories will directly affect the results of the

research. For this reason, in the table below, a comparison of various sports has been made in order to broaden the perspectives of researchers and narrow the boundaries of extreme sports.

Table 3. Classification of adventure sports, high-risk sports, extreme sports categories Buckley, 2018)

	Adventure-high-risk sports	Extreme sports
Surfing	Usually involving travel to remote areas, warm water climate, sea depth moderate, places with medium and large-sized waves	Very large, fast or gradual waves, especially shallow or rocky above sea level or in oceans, cold water climate, at night or in areas with high risk of sharks, areas with obstacles such as logs, etc
Snowboarding, Skiing, Heliskiing	Long, steep or sloping hills; especially high altitude; that obstacles are controllable; Moderate, gentle and steeply sloping runways, where there is a risk of avalanches but where avalanche control practices can be carried out, where there is no risk of hitting rocks	The cavities opened by the flood waters; steep, sloping and cliff terrain with obstruction of visibility, tackling sliding snow mass, areas where avalanche danger poses a potential risk, jumps and maneuvers of considerable height with very precise take-off and landing to avoid rocks or other obstacles
Whitewater Canoe	For experienced kayakers, where there is a previous exploration and where there are no potentially fatal obstacles, hydraulics, or large waterfalls with currents of up to 4 to 5 degrees	Passages and obstacles with currents of 5 degrees and above, no visibility, large waterfalls, potentially fatal hydraulic features; Inevitable sluices, stoppers or overhang holes.
Hang Gliding, Paragliding	Steady wind, soft take-off and landing, tandem flight; Hilly areas where solo flights can be performed by qualified pilots, including cross-country thermal flights	Cliffs with sharp edges, strong thermal currents, jumps from structures such as ramps, bridges and buildings; high-altitude flights; flight in severe strong thermals; flight during storms; aerobatic maneuvers from storm fronts, wave clouds, swirling clouds; terrain without landing areas, night flights.
Parachuting	Tandem jumps, solo jumps for experienced paratroopers; Medium altitude, calm or low wind, daylight hours, areas where landing areas are safe	Free fall, opening of a parachute near the landing distance during free fall, strong winds, high-altitude jumps, night jumps, jumps in harsh climatic conditions and especially in remote areas (for example, the North Pole); Unsafe landing sites
Climbing	Rock and ice climbing with adequate skills, equipment, and protection, usually < 5.10 (depending on the climber's specialty); safe and easily accessible areas; good weather conditions	Free climbing, large boulders, steeply spaced passage areas, ice climbs, frozen waterfall climbs, remote areas with low probability of transportation and rescue, severe weather conditions,

In line with the explanations and categories in the studies, interviews and tables in the literature, we can list the characteristics of extreme sports participants as follows;

- An extreme sport is not an ordinary pursuit.
- It's a physical discipline that pushes your boundaries on risk continuity.
- It forces the individual to undergo trainings that will keep them up-to-date in order to remain a whole.
- Requires interdisciplinary cross-training.
- It forces the individual to focus.
- Motives for adventure with love.
- Improves bonds between extreme sports participants
- New equipment encourages the individual to find and design new methods. It encourages the individual to search for new places for practice practices and to open up to the world (O'Neil, 2017).

Extreme sports participants;

- Responsible
- Time management
- Analytical thinking ability
- Doesn't like to take risks
- Loving to live
- Careful
- Well-trained
- High self-awareness
- Disciplined
- Loving to live

They are people who are conscious of death (Pain ve Kerr, 2004).

When the studies with the keyword "extreme sports" are scanned in the national and international literature in general, it is noteworthy that some of these studies position the concept of extreme sports and extreme sports participants correctly; in some studies, it is noteworthy that the participants are included under a forced or wrong category (Young, 2002; Quester, Beverland, & Farrelly, 2006; Fjell et al.,



2007; Willig, 2008; Brymer and Oades, 2008; Brymer and Oades, 2009; Michel et al., 2009; Brymer, Downey, & Gray, 2009; Brymer and Gray, 2010; Simsek, 2010; Simsek, 2011; Raute and Topič, 2011; Bujdosó and Dávid, 2013; Ma and Dutch, 2013; Demirhan et al., 2014; Ceylan, Akçakoyun and Mutlu, 2015;; Ceylan, Akçakoyun, and Sükan, 2016; Heirene et al., 2016; Zhou et al., 2020; Brymer et al., 2020; Raggiotto, Scarpi, & Moretti, 2020; Kuzikova et al., 2020; Monasterio, Brymer, & Stewart, 2020; Gardner, Grimm & Conner, 2021).

Although these studies in the national and international literature are exemplary studies that are scanned and examined based on the keyword "extreme sports", in-depth analyzes of these studies can also be made by scanning through the database based on certain years. Our focus here is to understand the concept of extreme sports and to position the participants in the right places in this direction and to select the sample of the researchers.

Few studies have addressed the interpersonal processes that define and enable extreme sport participation. Such studies have adopted qualitative research methodologies to access the meanings and motivations associated with extreme sports. Studies focusing on meanings and motivations suggest that extreme sport participation can be understood as a dynamic process of motivational evolution and risk acculturation that leads to the formation of a high-risk identity (Celsi et al., 1993; Larkin and Griffiths, 2004).

The rewards that individuals receive for investing in such a process include emotional, social, and psychological benefits. Studies focusing on meanings and motivations have shed light on why individuals may engage in risky activities that must seem "painfully unnecessary" to most people. Crucially, they have done so without conceptualizing risk-taking behavior as the product of pathological traits or conditions in the individuals involved. In this way; while extreme sport is an unconventional activity, it can be understood as a meaningful and purposeful one (Celsi et al., 1993; Larkin and Griffiths, 2004).

This study provides a new perspective on the meanings of risky behaviors and considers the possibility that seeking such experiences is not necessarily a sign of psychopathology. The study is interested in what it might mean for individuals to engage in physically demanding and risky practices and attempts to explain the meanings of their experiences for participants using a phenomenological perspective. The study challenges the assumed relationship between extreme sports and risk, and therefore repositions the experience in a previously unexplored.

METODOLOGY

The study was based on semi-structured interviews using a phenomenological approach. Data were collected directly from the interviews. The interview participants (25 males and 6 females, aged 28 to 53) were thirty-one extreme sports participants from different parts of the world who volunteered to participate in the study. The extreme sports

included B.A.S.E. jumping, big wave surfing, wingsuit flying, waterfall canoeing, extreme mountaineering and solo abseiling. The interviews were analysed using Colaizzi's (1978) version of the phenomenological method. The study describes the themes identified in the analysis and discusses their implications.

RESEARCH PROCESS

Recruitment of Participants

Experience with the phenomenon under study and the ability to talk about it in a reasonable way were determined as the only criteria for selecting participants. The number of participants in the study was kept high. The reason for this was to reach more experience and a wider set of meanings. In this context, thirty-one extreme sports practitioners participated in the study.

Interviews

Participants were contacted via e-mail and informed and an online interview was requested at a convenient time. Some participants responded directly to the interview form via e-mail. Participants were interviewed on the day and time they chose. All interviews were recorded one-on-one and without any interruptions. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. In order to encourage rich descriptions of the experience, participants were asked questions about their feelings before and after participating in extreme sports, their best/worst experiences, and the original meaning of the experience. The first stage of interview analysis involved watching each recording again immediately after the interview and transcribing it (Amlani, 1998; Ettl, 1998).

All responses given by participants were transcribed verbatim. During the transcription process, participants were coded as K1, K2, K3, ... with anonymity. The second step involved reading and thematically analyzing individual interviews and transcripts as separate entities. All transcripts were reviewed as themes became more apparent. Potential themes to emerge were continuously questioned. Interesting statements were highlighted. Some ideas were noted. All emerging themes were evaluated. Initial thematic ideas identified were grouped. Finally, all themes were checked against the texts.

Data Analysis

Analysis of Individual Transcripts

The transcripts were processed one by one. The first stage of analysis involved identifying phrases or words that were relevant to the nature of the phenomenon. The phrases were then grouped in terms of the themes they evoked. Once all the phrases had been grouped into appropriate themes, one general statement per theme was written to capture the essence of each theme. This completed the analysis of an individual transcript. The same procedure was followed for each transcript.

Integration of Themes

Firstly, five themes and contents shared by all participants were selected. In the next step, all themes shared by the participants were determined and presented under headings.

Builder Themes

The descriptive statement is structured around a series of themes. These are; identity and commitment, defining boundaries, risk, feelings of achievement and personal insight, extraordinary experiences similar to Maslow's peak experiences. Each of the constituent themes that emerged as a result of the content analysis obtained from the participants are presented below under headings, along with the participant explanations.

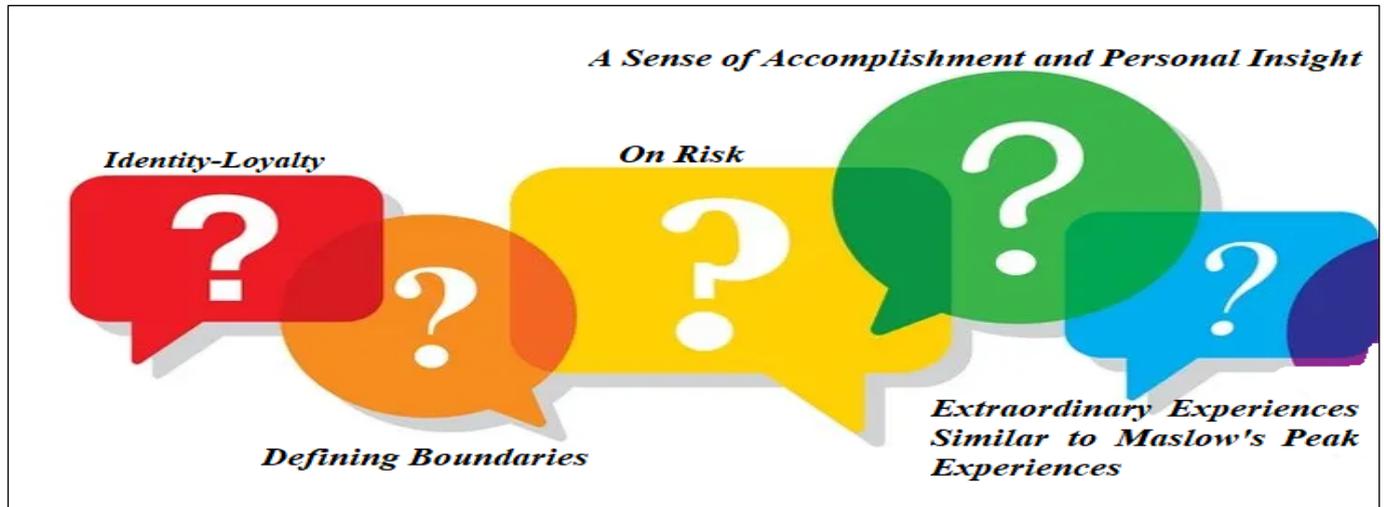


Figure 1. Builder themes that emerged as a result of the content analysis obtained from the participants.

Identity Loyalty

It just feels right. It's like a puzzle, a problem I've mapped out in my mind. It pushes me to do my best and test my limits. I get a great sense of euphoria from activities like skiing, rock climbing, water sports, skydiving... I feel like they're an integral part of who I am and when I do them, they make me feel truly alive (Skydiving, Wakeboarding, Skiing, BMX, Mountain Biking/Downhill Biking, Traditional Rock Climbing, Sport Climbing, Bouldering, 26 age, Male, United States). It's part of my existence. I can't compare it to anything else because that's how I live (Skiing, Backcountry Skiing, Heliskiing, Mountain Biking/Downhill Biking, 51 age, Male, Canada).

It's such a close bond, it's a part of me, and without it, I feel like something's missing. I want to be involved in this experience, and it really hurts my feelings when people don't know why I do it and why it's so special to me. Every time I do it, I feel like my true self, my worries and fears, just disappear when I give it my full attention, which happens naturally when I do it (Kiteboarding, 28 age, Female, Germany).

They are a part of me, they complete me. They bring out the child in me (Skiing, Heliskiing, Bodyboarding/Big Waves Surfing, Kiteboarding, Mountaineering, Traditional Rock Climbing, Ice Climbing, Scuba Diving, Sport Climbing, Caving, Bouldering, 52 age, Male, Spain).

For me it's a chance to connect with nature. I can say it's a part of me, it feels really organic (Bungee Jumping, Big wave surfing, 43 age, Male, Melbourne).

Defining Boundaries

Superficially, extreme sports are similar to many high-risk sports. They are spontaneous, often occur in natural settings, and have limited certainty of outcome. However, while an accident or error mismanaged in high-risk activities usually results only in injury (Hunt, 1995), an accident or error in extreme sports that is ineffectively managed often results in death (Brymer, 2005).

I'm not sure how to explain it to you. It's amazing and a little scary. Seeing the stone pass by while jumping and being aware of everything that's happening around me but at the same time feeling like you're not in that world and you're in a void. It's a unique experience (BASE Jumping, Skydiving, 29 age, Male, Australia).

As if I were one with the wind, one with the earth. With each jump I learn about my limits. Close Range Wingsuiting will be the next step (Skydiving, 39 age, Male, Harbor springs Michigan).

To be able to do something so exciting in such a beautiful place is the best thing in the world for me. I will never stop unless I die or become paralyzed (Snowboarding, Paragliding, Downhill Biking, 29 age, Male, Vancouver).

I feel like a greater, evolved being of existence. You don't need to be on the verge of death or anything to feel that...you just need to push yourself, your mind and your body to see what it can do. Then you'll feel like you're alive (Bodyboarding/Big Waves Surfing, Parkour, BMX, 29 age, Male Melbourne Australia).

No one makes it out alive, so I try to live as much as possible. Experiencing exciting situations brings more joy to my life than anything else and ultimately it is worth the risk of death because if I am not doing what I love, what is the point of trying to survive as long as possible? People who have never tried something extraordinary do not understand this. It is very difficult to convince someone who is afraid of heights that they are safe. I was afraid of heights before climbing and after overcoming the mental boundaries a whole new world opened up that I want everyone to experience at least once in their life. It would make the world better (Skydiving, Mountaineering, Paramotor, Off-road onewheel riding, Free Solo Climbing, 26 age, Male, West Virginia USA).

I feel like I'm walking the line between life and death, I feel alive (Big Waves Surfing, Ice Climbing, 47 age, Male, Scotland).

It makes me feel alive, being on the edge puts me in the right place (Solo Climber, 53 age, Male, UK).

You have no choice but to realize that if you do this wrong, you will die (Mountaineering, 45 age, Female, USA).

Examples of extreme sports activities that include these descriptions include BASE jumping, extreme skiing, extreme canoeing, solo climbing, and high-level solo mountaineering.

On Risk

Risk-taking constructs such as thrill seeking may predict potential for participation in high-risk sports, but they do not necessarily predict participation in extreme sports (Brymer, 2005).

Many people label people like me as thrill seekers or risk takers. Anyone who labels me is very wrong (Mountaineering, 38 age, Male, Malaysia).

It is an incredible feeling and an extremely intense emotion is loaded into you. Often in a BASE jump or Wingsuit Flying if something goes wrong, which is a possibility, you are dead if you do not know that you are racing against the seconds to figure it out (Skydiving, Wingsuit Flying, 39 age, Male, United States).

Much of the early research on risk focuses on sensation seeking, a phrase I've come to loathe. I'm not sure what that means, and it doesn't seem to me that researchers are that far ahead (Skydiving, Bungee Jumping, Wingsuit Flying, 36 age, Male, Australia).

Every time I jump I feel fear, excitement and worry about my safety. This worry is what keeps me safe. The only rule when doing this sport is to get high level training, do repetitions and follow the rules. As long as you do that there will be no problem. The biggest priority for these things is safety (Skydiving, Wingsuit Flying, 24 age, Female, Germany).

Perhaps researchers' tendency to focus on theories that involve risk or excitement or both misses the point entirely

when it comes to understanding the people who play these sports (Storry, 2003).

Extraordinary Experiences Similar to Maslow's Peak Experiences

Peak experiences are joyful events that do not involve superior behavior, are characterized by altered perceptions of time and space, floating and flying, calm and stillness, and self-affirmation among other experiences (Lipscombe, 1999).

Examples include: Everything slows down so you can deal with any situation (Climber, 33 age, Female, USA).

During those seconds you are more alive than at any other time in your life (B.A.S.E. Jumping, Skydiving, Wingsuit Flying, 35 age, Male, United States).

It's an extreme feeling that you can't describe until you do it, but there's no feeling like it. Life seems so sweet and you feel so good (B.A.S.E. Jumping, Skydiving, Wingsuit Flying, Male, B.A.S.E., 33 age, Male, Canada).

There's an inner relief, a calmness that comes from being in a wonderful place where you know you're in free fall, just screaming over these rocks and being in control, and also a heightened awareness and clarity (B.A.S.E. Jumping, 34 age, Male, Chicoutimi, Qc, Can).

Flying along the wave with the air blowing from the surface of the wave makes you almost weightless under the board, sometimes it flies against your body and it's just a feeling of being and you don't want to do anything (Big Wave Surfer, 43 age, Male, USA).

A match made in heaven (Skydiving, Slackline, Free Solo Highlining, Motorcycle stunting, 33 age, Male, Charlotte NC).

I am not crazy, and I am the opposite of reckless. My relationship with action sports is all about skill. I am a better skier than a snowmobile operator, so I enjoy skiing much more than I enjoy snowmobiling. It is about the battle within me. I really feel like there is a battle within me, and when I win, I will have conquered myself (Downhill Biking, Free Solo Highlining, 29 age, Male, USA).

Survival is the most primitive joy humans have ever experienced (B.A.S.E. Jumping, Slackline, Free Solo Highlining, 32 age, Male, USA).

This is my church and my religion. 90% of my 500 jumps are solo. I recommend this sport to everyone. It has been good for my soul over time (B.A.S.E. Jumping, Skydiving, Wingsuit Flying, Air medical transport, helicopters and fixed wing, 47 age, Male, USA).

At that moment you calm down, nothing else in the world matters (Skydiving, Fun Jumpers, 36 age, Male, Unroofed states of America).

RESULTS AND EFFECTS

There is a negative tendency in the literature on the concept of extreme sports and extreme sports participants and by the

public, such as "extreme sports are dangerous", "extreme sports participants knowingly take risks", "extreme sports participants want to die on purpose". This raises the question of what the concept of extreme sport actually means and whether the definition is "associated with risk-taking resulting in a high degree of injury or death". High-risk sports or adventure sports can evoke a sense of risk, danger and excess in terms of content, and this creates an illusion of perception in the individual, similar to extreme sports. In particular, the popularity of such risk-related sports also attracts the attention of the media. Since extreme sports are not yet fully defined, media advertising companies are trying to create a marketing strategy by using concepts such as alternative, adventure sports, high-risk sports, lifestyle and action instead of the Olympic Games and various games.

This has become a problem that can lead to ambiguity as well as a bad definition. However, in the field of recreation and sports science, the definition should be conceptually clear and linguistically accurate, and researchers should not be influenced by the terminology used by the media. While this lack of consistency attributed to the concept of extreme sports in terminology reveals the fact that researchers who want to examine this field try to create their own criteria by forcibly dividing such sports into categories; Researchers who wonder what extreme sports are and find themselves in the chaos of studies in the literature as a starting point will also have difficulty in forming something in their minds about the concept of extreme sports and extreme sports participants. Since the definitions given in the minology will serve as evidence for the concept of extreme sports and are important for the beginning of a new argument, the study focuses on examining the terminology of "adventure sports, high-risk sports and extreme sports", which are widely used interchangeably to represent what is perceived as "extra-norm activities".

In particular, "extreme sports" are things in which the participant is exposed to natural or unusual physical and mental difficulties such as speed, altitude, depth or natural forces, beyond the reasonably accepted norm, which is counterintuitive, involves a risk of serious injury and death, and that "extreme sports participants", unlike other sports participants, are conscious of time management, education level, self-control and awareness, focus, do not like to take risks, have a joy of life and are conscious of death. Moreover, an ordinary recreational activity, adventure recreation, or high-risk sport in which a balance of skills and abilities cannot be established that can lead to an unsuccessful outcome is more likely to result in injury and/or death of the participant, as opposed to extreme sports. For this reason, the fact that the injury and/or death rates are more or less and that this is often categorized in the literature does not mean that the sport is "risk-free".such as speed, altitude, depth or natural forces, beyond the reasonably accepted norm, which is counterintuitive, involves a risk of serious injury and death, and that "extreme sports participants", unlike other sports participants, are conscious of time management, education level, self-control and awareness, focus, do not like to take

risks, have a joy of life and are conscious of death. Moreover, an ordinary recreational activity, adventure recreation, or high-risk sport in which a balance of skills and abilities cannot be established that can lead to an unsuccessful outcome is more likely to result in injury and/or death of the participant, as opposed to extreme sports. For this reason, the fact that the injury and/or death rates are more or less and that this is often categorized in the literature does not mean that the sport is "risk-free". On the contrary, it should not be forgotten that a sport or activity itself and the people who perform that activity are decisive factors in the death and injury rates. While emphasizing that the perception that extreme sports are dangerous and that extreme sports participants take risks with the desire to die on purpose is wrong, on the contrary, the participants are people who are well educated above the standards and have put the extreme sport they are interested in at the center of their lives; It reveals the claim that sports or recreational activities in which the balance of skills and competence cannot be established can cause injury and/or death of the participants, unlike extreme sports.

The results of the qualitative analysis conducted in a section of the study also support the concepts emphasized above. The study attempted to reflect the differences in the extreme sports experience of the participants, and at this point, a range and diversity of experiences were highlighted in the study. It is generally thought that extreme sports participation is only related to taking risks and a death wish. This study presented the findings obtained from a phenomenological study that showed that focusing on these is inappropriate. The participants do not think that they do these types of sports because they want to take risks or have a death wish. When considered, the extreme sports selected to define the phenomenon of interest bring together many activities that differ in various aspects under the same roof and bring them together at a common point. In other words, different extreme sports are actually brought together artificially. This situation indicates that more research should be done on the distinctions between different types of extreme sports and their experiential characteristics. The analysis presented within the scope of the study suggests that participation in extreme sports carries meanings beyond those attributed to the participants in the literature and fulfills psychological functions. It is clearly stated that participating in extreme sports activities means much more than taking risks or wishing for death for the participants, and instead of focusing on conscious, unreal, unresolved or distorted conflicts regarding the activities, the participants participate in such activities with conscious choices and are pleased with this situation. Moreover, it is an undeniable fact that they see such activities as an element of identity by placing them at the center of their lives.

According to the participants' explanations, experiencing extreme sports allows for explanations such as a way of being, a way of finding oneself. Therefore, it is not seen as a "means of self-destruction" as distorted in this literature, but rather as a key to finding oneself and self-realization. Some participants stated that such experiences are indescribable,

an experience and a feeling that cannot be expressed in words. The participants see extreme sports as a way of expanding their range of experiences in order to realize their ways of being by offering new and developing experiences. It is seen that such ways of being involve some risks in terms of the individual's personal health and safety, and that the participants are fully aware that these risks and the possibility of suffering are an indispensable aspect of the experience. Future research should focus more carefully on the contradictions, focusing on the aspects that characterize the extreme sports experience.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study addressed the views of "extreme sports" participants regarding their experiences, but the number of participants was limited. At this point, reaching more extreme sports types and participants may provide additional benefits. It is thought that the terminology of "high risk" was not completely abandoned in the study, but the use of the most appropriate definition for "extreme sports" will contribute to the consistent comparison of future study parameters. At this point, the determination of the sample group by taking into account the "definitions and categories" of extreme sports, high-risk sports and adventure sports in the study will form a solid basis to advance the scientific process.

It is recommended that methodological diversity be increased for future studies. In addition to qualitative methods, the use of quantitative or mixed methods can enable a more detailed analysis of the individual and psychosocial dimensions of extreme sports participation. Furthermore, conducting longitudinal studies can reveal changes in motivation over time among extreme sports participants, transformations in their perception of risk, and the effects of accumulated experience on behavior. Furthermore, studies that consider the impact of cultural context would be valuable. In particular, the perception of extreme sports, the interpretation of risk, and participation motivations may vary across different cultural and social structures. Therefore, cross-cultural comparative studies would enrich theoretical and applied knowledge in the field of extreme sports.

Author Contributions

Ö. Y.: data collection. Ö.Y: data analysis and original draft preparation. Ö.Y review and editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

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Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in this study.

Data Availability Statement

Datasets are available through the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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