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## **DIFFERENT VARIABLES INVESTIGATION OF ATHLETIC IDENTITY IN TEAM SPORT**

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### **Abstract**

*The aim of this study is to determine the relationship of athletic identity between different variables such as license period, sport branch and the conditions of national players. The research group has been established of 485 athletes who struggle on the top platform in various sport branches in Turkey leagues. As data collection tool, the athlete identity scale was used in research. At the evaluation of data: frequency, mean, standard deviation, scales, Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient, t-test for independent groups, one-way analysis of variance for independent groups (ANOVA), simple correlation analysis and simple linear regression analysis methods were used. According to the findings, athlete identity varies significantly for the license period and nationalities of variables but does not cause any difference for sport branch.*

### **Keywords**

Identity, Athlete Identity, Team Sports

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## **1. Introduction**

The search of identity is one of the basic features of the development. Identification

(identity) is before the dawn in our self, we are still a subjective way that the integrity, consistency and a sense of continuity; our response to the question of "Who am I"? that we give on the way that we are different from everyone else and unique human being. As related to our physical structure, this feeling is shaped by our memories, values, beliefs, experiences and gender, ethnic, age and status etc. our social position, occupational statuses and perceptions of others of us (Budak, 2000).

Sport has an important role in person's socialization due to the feature of being a social activity that allows individuals to participate in the dynamic social environment. When sport is often considered to be a collective activity in modern societies, individuals who are interested in sports come into social relations with different groups of people through sporting activities. Sport enables individuals keeping in touch with people who are in another environment and have different beliefs and thoughts, being impressed by them and affecting them by getting rid of their narrow world. (Yetim, 2015). Sport can provide individuals to understand and make sense of themselves by creating an awareness in individuals. On the axis of acquiring a status and creating a personality which is one of most basic needs of human, as social phenomenon, sport can provide an opportunity for these targets. Conducted researches have revealed that athletic participation is extremely important in terms of the individual's sense of belonging. For example, Griffin (1998), has remarked that children determine who they are and experience an identity acquisition through sport. The researcher expressed that this come true by talking children's on sport issues or being a fan of a team.

Brewer implies that as well as the individual identity, the behaviours laid down on the sport events represent the athletic identity. (Brewer et al., 1993). This role come into existence in a social network where individuals have continuing relations with other people in a social frame and spend with sporty interactions. (Cornelius, 1995). All the elements that wrapped the individual's own sport environment (coaches, teammates, family) can provide formation of a strong sporting identity by supporting this identity (Brewer et al., 1993).

Many of the actions brought by the sporting living space to the individual's life can be among the factors that serve the athletic identity. Every behaviour performed depending on sporting event in participation will be able to serve this identity. For example, the behavioural models that a football player formed according to his/her life (regular diet, regular sleep etc.) can get its source from the /her athletic identity. (Çetinkaya, 2010).

In the relevant literature, it is not possible to encounter with an intensive study history on the identity and athletic identity right now. Athletic identity refers to a long and arduous

process from the beginning of the sporting participation to be brought up the international sport achievements at the highest level. So that identity development; socialization, career development, emotional health development, regulation of life skills, positive self-esteem and many personal development field can be able to show progress perhaps more clearly at the axis of mightiness of the athletic identity. In addition, this research can provide us with a theoretical framework for creating a social structure and educate individuals who ensure the both physical and mental integrity as a part of their social responsibility. From this point, the purpose of this research is to determine the relationship of athletic identity between variables such as gender, age, and marital status, duration of license, the sport branch and the status of national players.

## **2. Method**

In 2013-2014 season, the female and male athletes participated in the branches of football (Men's Super League 18 teams, Women 1st League 10 teams), basketball (Men' 1st League 16 teams, Women 1st League 14 teams), volleyball ((Men's 1st League 12 teams, Women 1st league of 12 teams) and handball (Men's 1st League 14 teams, Women 1st League 10 teams) have formed the population of this study and foreign athletes were not included in the study. The number of athletes involved in the research population is 1350 according to obtained data from the relevant federations for the season indicated above. The sample group of study has been involved in a total of 485 top-level athletes including 239 men and 246 women from 42 teams in 4 different branches. The mean age of the athletes involved in this study is  $24.78 \pm 4.43$ . (Male,  $25.99 \pm 4.54$ , female  $23.61 \pm 3.99$ ).

In determining the sample method process, it especially has been acted out on the information that whether the interested properties of volume of population and population units are a homogeneous sample or not. Based on this idea, "Simple Random Sampling" method which is often preferred at the field of social sciences and derived from theory of probability due to some of the features and becoming a kind of "Probability Sampling Method" is preferred. (Ural & Kılıç, 2006). In such a sampling method, each unit located in the population has likelihood to be equal and independent to be chosen to the sample group. So, entering of a unit to the sample is not based on the choice of others to the sample.

## **3. Data Collecting Tools**

In this study Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) was used with "Personal Information Form".

#### **4. Personal Information Form**

Personal information form is composed of a 9-question-form about the independent variables that are inquired to gain information about the athletes compete in the branches of football( Super League Male, 1st league Female), basketball( Basketball League of Turkey), volleyball (1st League) and handball( Super League).

#### **5. Athlete Identity Measurement Scale**

Athlete Identity Measurement Scale (Brewer & Cornelius,2001) was used to measure identity roles of athletes. AIMS were used in different cultures and studies with different numbers of items and with sub-dimensions (Hale et al., 1999). The adaptation of the scale into Turkish and investigation of it by means of psychometric features was done by the researcher in 2010 and the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was found as  $\alpha=0.846$  ( $n=200$ ) in order to determine the reliability of the values gained by this scale. The expressions in this 10-item scale as evaluated by the 5 point Likert scale as 1= totally disagree and 5= totally agree. The version of this scale used in this study was retested by means of it's Turkish validity and reliability. According to the analysis results performed to determine the convenience of the data gained by samples in the scope of this study CEC Sample Convenience Measure 0.81; was accepted as significant as a result of Barlett Sphericity Test as well. ( $\chi^2=79.933$ ,  $SD=30$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). First of all, in order to confirm the factor structure of this 10-item single factored structure, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was done. It was seen that the adaptive values gained by CFA ( $\chi^2/sad=2.66$ ,  $RMSEA=0.07$ ,  $SRMR=0.02$ ,  $CFI=0.96$ ,  $GFI=0.85$ ,  $NFI=0.93$ ) are on a good level. Item factor load values change between 0.41 and 0.83. The coefficient of internal consistency of this 10-item single dimensional form used in this study was measured as 0.84. The arithmetic average of total AIMS scores of the attendants in the scope of this study is 4.50 and the standard deviation is 44.

#### **6. Collecting data**

The questionnaire form is used in this research was applied to the chosen athletes by the researcher in the season of 2013-2014 among 4 different branches of sports (football, basketball, volleyball, handball) during their spare time after training in their clubhouse of the city that they function. The athletes were informed about the aim of the study and filling of the data collecting tool in details. The data collecting tool was checked by the researcher and lacking and incorrect ones were taken out of research. Later, the valid and acceptable data

collecting forms applied to the athletes (485 pieces) were coded and transferred to electronic environment.

## 7. Data analysis

The data analysis collected in the research was performed in the statistics package programmes of SPSS 16.0 ve AMOS 19.0. Frequency, arithmetic average, standard deviation, scales Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, t-test for independent samples, one-way analysis of variance for independent samples, (ANOVA), simple correlation analysis and simple linear regression analysis methods were used for data evaluation. In case the variance analysis is significant, the Tukey HSD test was used to determine the source of difference. In the tests performed to analyse data, the variance equality principle in parametric test premises was taken as a basis and in case the variances were not equal, no significant difference was sought among the samples even "p" value is below the rate of significance level. The significance level in analysis was determined as  $\alpha = 0.05$ . To provide evidence for the factor structure of Athlete Identity Measurement Scale, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed.

## 8. Findings

**Table 1:** *All AIMS score distribution for all the attendants*

<b>Scales</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>	<b><u>N</u></b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b><u>Ss</u></b>
<b>AIMS in total</b>	10	485	4.50	.44



**Table 2:** ANOVA results directed to the attendants' score distribution of AIMS according to their term of licence

Scale	Term of Licence	N	Avg.	Ss	sd	F	p	Significant difference
AIMS in total	10 years or less	252	4.52	.41				
	11-15 years	146	4.46	.48	2/482	.915	.401	---
	16 years or more	87	4.47	.44				

Examining chart 2, it is seen that the individuals have 10 or less years term of licence (Avg.=4.52) have a higher AIMS score. However, the ANOVA results performed to specify if the difference revealed is significant or not, showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the AIMS scores of the participants by means of their terms of licence. ( $F_{482}=.915, p=.401$ ).

**Table 3:** The ANOVA results of the attendants related to AIMS score distribution according to their branches of sports

Scale	Branch of Sports	N	Avg.	Ss	sad	F	p	Significant difference
AIMS in total	1.Football	117	4.48	.42				
	2.Basketball	114	4.46	.51				
	3.Volleyball	110	4.41	.42				
	4.Handball	144	4.60	.40				

Taking into consideration of the ANOVA results in Chart 3, a significant difference is seen among the AIMS scores of the attendants according to their branches of sports. ( $F_{481}=.4.005, p=.008$ ). a multiple comparison test Tukey HSD was performed to determine which samples have significant differences. According to the test results it was seen that there was a significant difference between the average scores of handballers (Avg. =4.60) with the volleyballers (Avg. =4.41) and the average scores of handballers were higher than of volleyballers.

**Table 4:** Test results of the attendants related to their AIMS score distribution according to their national player's state

Scale	National	Players	N	Avg	Ss	sd	t	p



AIMS in total	Yes		190	4.48	.49	483	-.733	.464
	No		295	4.51	.40			

Examining the average AIMS scores of the attendants in terms of their state of national players, it was obtained that the score average of attendants that are national players is Avg.=4.48 and the average of the attendants that are not is Avg.= 4.51. As a result of t-test performed to determine if the difference between the average scores of the attendants was statistically significant or not, it was obtained that the difference was not statistically significant.

## 9. Discussion and Conclusion

At this part of the research, the data obtained from athletic identity scale are interpreted and literature is discussed for good and all.

According to research findings, the athletic identity scores of athletes who have 10 and less years ( $X = 4, 52$ ) term of license are higher than those athletes who have 11-15 ( $X = 4,46$ ) and 16 and more years ( $X = 4,47$ ) term of license. However, between participants' athletic identity scores and term of license, it has seen that there is not a significant difference. Even though there is not a significant difference between athletic identity and term of license, having high score of athletes who have 10 and less years term of license, due to the decrease in the possessed perception of ability in the upcoming years can be interpreted as the decline of athletic identity. In this sense when analyzed in literature, Brewer (1993) findings bear closer results to us. In his study, researcher determined is relation in a negative way between college athletes' ages and athletic identity.

When the related literature is analyzed it is possible to encounter different findings. In his study, Oregon (2010), similar with our findings, could not find any significant difference between athletics time in school years and athletic identity. In addition, the writer reports that they are already participated in college life with this athletic identity. In her study Elasky (2006), determined a significant relationship in a positive way between the increase in athlete's length of staying in the game and athletic identity. However this relationship loses its importance when the increase of athletics' identity is a matter of seasonal performance. These results point out that when the athletes in a team are compared to each other, the athletic identity score of the athlete who has more length of staying in the game will increase. In addition, Cornelius (1995) defends that athletic identity shows up important social



dimensions such as the experience that influences self-concept, communication with other people and occupation of sporting events and Horton and Mack (2000) defends that athletes with these strong athletic identities strengthen these athletic identities by spending more time with their teammates and coaches.

It is observed that according to branch of sports, there is a significant difference among participants' athletic identity scores ( $F_{481} = .4.005$ ,  $p = .008$ ). According to research results, it is found that there is a significant difference between handball player's and volleyball player's average scores and handball player's average scores are higher than volleyball players. In the related literature, as of this moment, it is not possible to encounter any study about athletic identity and branch of sports. However, a related study is conducted by Çetinkaya (2010). In his study about student athletes Çetinkaya found out that students' athletic identities that do team sports are higher than the ones who do individual sports. This situation can be interpreted in the direction of supporting the identity that in social network and a circle of friendship occurred in team sports even more. In fact, the foresight that human as a social being, in sports as well as in other fields will show tendency to the group's values they involved in which interact with can be defended.

According to research findings, the athletic identity levels of the participants who are national team athletes are lower than the ones who cannot be national team athletes. However it is determined that the difference is not significant. Therefore, it can be said that it does not change depending on participants athletic identity level is national or not. We can explain this situation in an example that our group is consist of athletes who compete in top level. Even though being a national team athlete is the dream of every athlete, in terms of top level athlete profile, our research group may not causes any significant difference on athletic identities.

As for Sellers and Kuperminc (1997) point out in their studies that young athletes take elite athletes who reached to be in the level of nationals as a model. As a result of that, researchers pointed out that this situation will contribute positively to athletic identity. We can evaluate this situation as a motivation factor for young athletes' identity strengthening.

Studies reveal the importance of bringing individuals in athletic identities at early ages. Therefore, this issue should be always among sporting institutions priority subjects and necessary arrangements should be provided. The close relation between individual's athletic identities and athletic performance is a vital issue. Concordantly, it will be extremely beneficial to create a unique athletic environment for them and improve and purify these two conditions from negative factors of environment.

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