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An Examination Of The Levels Of Commitment To Sport Among Professional Football, Basketball, And Volleyball Team Athletes

Profesyonel Futbol, Basketbol ve Voleybol Takımı Sporcularının Spora Bağlılık Düzeylerinin İncelenmesi

Faik Öz¹0, Faruk Albay*²0, İlkay Yazarer³0

*Correspondence: Faruk ALBAY

<u>faruk.albay@omu.edu.tr</u> Ondokuz Mayıs University, Yaşar Doğu Faculty Of Sports Sciences Orcid: 0000-0001-9994-7058

- ¹ Ondokuz Mayıs University, Yaşar Doğu Faculty Of Sports Sciences, Samsun, Türkiye, Orcid:009-0008-8883-2130 dr.ozfaik@gmail.com,
- ²Ondokuz Mayıs University, Yaşar Doğu Faculty Of Sports Sciences, Samsun, Türkiye, Orcid:0000-0001-9994-7058 farbay605501@gmail.com
- ³Tokat Gazi Osma Paşa University, Faculty Of Sports Sciences, Tokat, Türkiye, Orcid:0000-0003-1800-5347 İlkay.yazarer@gop.edu.tr



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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of skill development environments on the levels of commitment to sports among team athletes. The findings of the study could serve as a valuable guide for sports administrators, coaches, and other relevant stakeholders in increasing athletes' motivation and commitment to sports. In this research, the data collection tools included the Personal Information Form prepared by the researchers and the "Sports Commitment Scale," developed by Guillen and Martinez-Alvarado (2014) and adapted into Turkish by Kayhan et al. A significant relationship was identified between the ages of athletes and their commitment to sports. According to the findings, athletes aged 30-34 demonstrated higher levels of commitment and focus compared to those aged 35 and above. Therefore, it can be concluded that the level of commitment to sports increases with age. The results obtained from the study indicate that volleyball players scored higher in the focus sub-dimension compared to football players. No statistically significant differences were found in the commitment levels of athletes based on income status, reasons for starting sports, or years of participation in a specific sport. Psychological support programs may help athletes improve their mental resilience and manage stress. Improving financial resources could make athletes' training and competitive processes more efficient.

Keywords Sports, motivation, team success.

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, takım sporcularının spora bağlılık düzeyleri üzerindeki beceri geliştirme ortamlarının etkisini incelemektir. Çalışmanın bulguları, spor yöneticileri, antrenörler ve diğer ilgili paydaşlar için sporcuların motivasyonunu ve spora bağlılığını artırmada değerli bir rehber niteliği taşıyabilir. Bu araştırmada, veri toplama araçları olarak araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan Kişisel Bilgi Formu ile Guillen ve Martinez-Alvarado (2014) tarafından geliştirilen ve Kayhan ve ark. tarafından Türkçeye uyarlanan "Spor Bağlılık Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda, sporcuların yaşları ile spora bağlılık düzeyleri arasında anlamlı bir ilişki tespit edilmiştir. Bulgulara göre, 30-34 yaş aralığındaki sporcular, 35 yaş ve üzerindekilere kıyasla daha yüksek bağlılık ve odaklanma düzeyi sergilemiştir. Bu doğrultuda, yaşın artmasıyla birlikte spora bağlılık düzeyinin yükseldiği sonucuna ulaşılabilir. Elde edilen sonuçlar, voleybol oyuncularının odaklanma alt boyutunda futbol oyuncularına kıyasla daha yüksek puan aldığını göstermektedir. Sporcuların gelir durumu, spora başlama nedenleri veya belirli bir spora katılım süreleri açısından bağlılık düzeylerinde istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark bulunmamıştır. Psikolojik destek programları, sporcuların zihinsel dayanıklılıklarını artırmalarına ve stres yönetimlerini geliştirmelerine yardımcı olabilir. Ayrıca, finansal kaynakların iyileştirilmesi, sporcuların antrenman ve müsabaka süreçlerini daha verimli hale getirebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler Spor, motivasyon takım başarısı.



Introduction

Sport can be considered an expression of a society's culture, a reflection of a nation's strength, a unifying force among communities with different lifestyles and viewpoints, a means of expressing emotions and thoughts, and even a sector that provides economic benefits to individuals, societies, and countries. Additionally, it contributes to both mental and physical well-being (Öz et al., 2023). Sport, considered a multidisciplinary concept, is divided into individual and team sports. Activities carried out individually with the aim of improving one's own performance or competing are referred to as individual sports. Individual sports can be found across a wide range and vary based on a person's preferences, abilities, and goals. Team sports refer to athletic activities in which a group of players comes together to work collaboratively toward a specific objective. In team sports, interaction among players requires coordination and collaboration. Team sports are typically played in a competitive environment and attract a large fan base. When individuals are drawn to team sports, their personal goals and abilities are taken into account. (Mercan, 2006), defines commitment as a high-level emotional state, expressing it as an individual's tendency to show affinity toward something perceived as superior to oneself and the feeling of obligation to fulfill associated responsibilities. The concept of commitment is characterized by three features: a strong desire toward a specific object or situation, sometimes an inability to control oneself in the face of this desire, and a persistent attitude toward that object or situation. These three fundamental elements significantly enhance an individual's level of commitment, forming the core dynamics of the commitment process (Shaffer, Hall, and Bit, 2000, as cited in Mercan, 2006). Individuals' commitment to sports is shaped by the interaction of various factors and can vary. Influences on people's commitment to sports include intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, sports culture, social support, goals and achievements, as well as physical and mental relaxation. The concept of athlete commitment reflects not only a sportsperson's confidence, dedication, and vitality but also their experience of a long-term, positive, and cognitive-affective engagement in sports. In this context, athlete commitment involves passionate and motivated participation in sports, while also encompassing the mental and emotional benefits that sports provide (Kelecek and Koruç, 2018, as cited in Uzgur et al., 2018). Commitment to sports reflects individuals' levels of maintaining regular exercise habits and the intensity of their participation in sporting activities. This commitment is shaped by various factors and can vary among different individuals. Several key factors are important for examining levels of commitment to sports, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, health and fitness, environmental factors, as well as cultural and social influences. Research has shown that athlete commitment is closely related to factors such as fundamental psychological needs, achievement levels, and motivation (Lonsdale et al., 2009; Kristensen, 2013, as cited in Uzgur et al., 2021). Additionally, it would be appropriate to address the different types of commitment to sports beyond these factors.

Recreational Commitment: This refers to sports activities undertaken for enjoyment, with participation entirely dependent on the individual's preference. The primary motivations here are pleasure and maintaining health.

Competitive Commitment: This type involves a performance-oriented focus, requiring a high level of commitment to achieve success in a specific sport. It is common among athletes.

Mandatory Commitment: This occurs when individuals are compelled to engage in sports, often for health reasons or professional responsibilities. Such commitment may arise from external pressures.

Commitment to sports can be influenced by the social and environmental factors individuals experience, as well as their personal motivations and goals. Examining these situations in sports sciences helps in understanding individuals' exercise habits and shaping sports policies. In light of these concepts, the aim of this study is to examine the impact of the environments for developing athletic skills on the commitment levels of team athletes. By emphasizing the social, cultural, and economic importance of sports, this research seeks to understand individuals' commitment to engaging in sports. Additionally, evaluating the determinants of commitment levels observed in athletes and the role of skill development processes in this context will be an important step toward developing effective strategies to enhance athletes' performance. The findings of this study can serve as a valuable guide for sports managers, coaches, and other stakeholders in increasing athletes' motivation and commitment to sports.

Material and Methods

Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the Ondokuz Mayıs University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, with decision number 347 dated March 29, 2024.

Research Model

In this study, a survey research model was employed, which is typically used to understand the current situation regarding a topic or population. Survey models can provide a general overview of the existing conditions before conducting a more comprehensive investigation on the subject (Karasar, 1999).

Research Group

The population of the study consists of professional volleyball, basketball, and football players actively participating in various cities and clubs across Turkey. The sample group comprises 203 athletes selected through a random sampling method from those participating in these team sports.

Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools used in this study include a Personal Information Form prepared by the researchers and the "Sports Commitment Scale," developed by (Guillen and Martinez-Alvarado, 2014) and adapted into Turkish by (Kayhan et al. 2020). The Sports Commitment Scale consists of 10 items across two sub-dimensions and utilizes a 7-point Likert scale. This scale is designed to measure athletes' commitment to sports. The items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Never, ..., 7 = Always). A high average score indicates a high level of commitment to sports, while a low average score suggests a low level of commitment. Additionally, there are no items in the scale that require reverse coding.

Data Collection

Before administering the survey questions to the professional athletes participating in team sports (volleyball, basketball, football), the purpose of the research was explained, and necessary information regarding important considerations was provided. The research surveys were conducted between April 15, 2024, and May 15, 2024, using Google Forms and physical survey methods, based on voluntary participation among football, basketball, and volleyball athletes.

Data Analysis

To assess the internal consistency of the responses provided by participants to the scale items, reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) were calculated (Table 1).

 Table 1. Internal Consistency Coefficients of Participants' Responses to Scale Items

Scale	Internal Consistency Coefficient	Evaluation
Total Sports Commitment	0,873	High Level of Reliability
Being fit	0,873	High Level of Reliability
Focus	0,775	Moderate Level of Reliability

In the study, the internal consistency of the total items of the sports commitment scale and its sub-dimensions was generally found to be high in reliability.

RESULTS

The distribution of the demographic characteristics of participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study among professional male athletes engaged in volleyball, basketball, and football across various cities in Turkey is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distributions of Participants' Demographic

	,	9					
Age Group	n	%	Duration in Sport	n	%		
18-21 Years	66	32,5	1-3 Years	7	3,4		
22-25 Years	52	25,6	3-7 Years	27	13,3		
26-29 Years	32	15,8	8-11 Years	70	34,5		
30-34 Years	29	14,3	12-15 Years	47	23,2		
35 and Older	24	11,8	16 Years and Above	52	25,6		
Total	203	100	Total	203	100		
Sport Type	n	%	Reason for Starting Sport	n	%		
Basketball	83	40,9	Family	71	35		
Volleyball	66	32,5	Social Environment	109	53,7		
Football	54	26,6	Financial Reasons	23	11,3		
Total	203	100	Total	203	100		
Income Level	n	%					
Low	51	25,1					
Medium	133	65,5					
High	19	9,4					
Total	203	100					

Among the individuals who voluntarily participated in the study, 35.5% were aged 18-21, 40.9% were basketball players, 65.5% had a medium income level, 34.5% had been involved in their sport for 8-11 years, and 53.7% started their sport through social connections (Table 2).

Table 3. Athletes Commitment Levels According to Age and Skill Development Environments

Scale and Sub-Dimensions	Age	n	Mean	SS	P-Value
	18-21	63,47	6,81b	0,84	
	22-25	62,02	7,95ab	1,11	
Total Commitment	26-29	60	9,58a	1,72	0,007
	30-34	57,45	9,97a	1,79	
	35 and older	63,38	6,00b	1,22	
	18-21	18,76	2,35ab	0,29	
	22-25	17,65	3,12b	0,44	
Focus	26-29	16,81	3,91a	0,7	0
	30-34	15,23	4,25a	0,76	
	35 and older	17,46	2,78c	0,57	
	18-21	44,71	4,94	0,61	
Being Fit	22-25	44,37	5,45	0,76	
	26-29	43,19	6,33	1,14	0,094
	30-34	42,23	6,61	1,19	
	35 and older	45,92	3,89	0,79	

In the study, a statistically significant difference was found between the total and sub-dimension scores of the sports commitment scale among athletes based on age (except for the being fit sub-dimension) (p < 0.05; Table 3). As a result of the findings, it was determined that athletes in the 30-34 age range had higher levels of sports commitment and focus compared to athletes aged 35 and older.

Table 4. Athletes Commitment Levels According to Income Status and Skill Development Environments

Scale and Sub-Dimensions	Income Status	n	Mean	SS	P-Value
Total Commitment	Low (Income < Expenses)	51	61,27	9,55	
	Medium (Income = Expenses)	133	61,84	7,85	0,896
	High (Income > Expenses)	19	61,26	7,29	
Focus	Low (Income < Expenses)	51	17,47	3,64	
	Medium (Income = Expenses)	133	17,49	3,31	0,998
	High (Income > Expenses)	19	17,53	3,29	
Being Fit	Low (Income < Expenses)	51	43,8	6,49	
	Medium (Income = Expenses)	133	44,35	5,26	0,786
	High (Income > Expenses)	19	43,74	4,7	

In the study, no statistically significant difference was found between the total and sub-dimension scores of the sports commitment scale among athletes based on income status (p > 0.05; Table 4).

 Table 5. Athletes Skill Development Environments and Commitment Levels by Sport

Scale and Sub-	Sport Type	n	Mean	SS	P-Value
	Basketball	83	60,92	8,36	
Total Commitment	Volleyball	66	63,41	6,46	0,103
Communicité	Football	54	60,61	9,64	
	Basketball	83	17,29ab	2,85	
Focus	Volleyball	66	18,44a	2,48	0,01
	Football	54	16,63b	4,63	
	Basketball	83	43,63	6,17	
Being Fit	Volleyball	66	44,97	4,43	0,327
	Football	54	43,98	5,68	

In the study, the findings based on athletes' sports indicated that no statistically significant difference was found between the total and sub-dimension scores of the sports commitment scale (except for the focus sub-dimension) (p > 0.05; Table 5).

However, the results showed that volleyball players had higher total scores in the focus sub-dimension compared to football players.

Table 6. Athletes Skill Development Environments and Commitment Levels According to Reasons for Starting the Sport

Scale and Sub-Dimensions	Reason for Starting	n	Mean	SS	P-Value
	Family	71	61,86	8,38	
Total Commitment	Social Circle	109	62,06	7,6	0,259
	Financial Reasons	23	59	10,3	
	Family	71	17,73	3,66	
Focus	Social Circle	109	17,53	3	0,323
	Financial Reasons	23	16,52	4,09	
	Family	71	44,13	5,4	
Being Fit	Social Circle	109	44,53	5,3	0,27
	Financial Reasons	23	42,48	6,79	

In the study, no statistically significant difference was found between the total and sub-dimension scores of the sports commitment scale among athletes based on their reasons for starting the sport (p > 0.05; Table 6).

Table 7. Athletes Skill Development Environments and Commitment Levels According to Duration of Participation in Their Sports

Scale and Sub-Dimensions	Age	n	Mean	SS	P-Value
	1-3 Years	7	61,14	7,58	
	4-7 Years	27	62,52	7,43	
Total Commitment	8-11 Years	70	61,67	8,56	0,854
	12-15 Years	47	60,57	9,65	
	16 years and above	52	62,19	6,94	
	1-3 Years	7	17,86	2,27	
	4-7 Years	27	18,63	2,31	
Focus	8-11 Years	70	17,7	3,38	0,234
	12-15 Years	47	16,91	3,82	
	16 years and above	52	17,08	3,47	
Being Fit	1-3 Years	7	43,29	5,74	
	4-7 Years	27	43,89	5,35	
	8-11 Years	70	43,97	5,79	0,692
	12-15 Years	47	43,66	6,56	
	16 years and above	52	45,12	4,13	

In the study, no statistically significant difference was found between the total and sub-dimension scores of the sports commitment scale among athletes based on the number of years they have practiced their sport (p > 0.05; Table 7).

Discussion

This study aims to examine the levels of sports commitment among professional male athletes in football, volleyball, and basketball, considering various variables. In the study, a significant relationship was found between athletes' sports commitment levels and their age. The results indicated that athletes in the 30-34 age range exhibited higher levels of commitment and focus compared to those aged 35 and above. It can be concluded that as age increases, the level of sports commitment also tends to increase. However, it was observed that individuals over 35, who are perceived to have reached sports fulfillment, begin to lose their priority for sports commitment. As individuals age, there is a natural decline in physical attributes such as muscle mass, endurance, and flexibility. Around the age of 35, individuals begin to feel these changes more acutely, which may reduce their satisfaction with sports. Particularly for those engaged in competitive sports, a decrease in performance compared to their earlier years can lead to a loss of motivation. A review of the literature reveals that, contrary to the findings of

the current research, studies by (Uzgur et al., 2021), (Uluç and Akçakoyun 2021), (Peke, 2020), (Kusan, 2024), (Çankaya, 2021), (Gülen et al., 2021), (Yamaner, et al. 2019), and (Yerlikaya, 2019) did not identify a relationship between age and sports commitment levels. (İlter, 2021) found results that align with the current research findings. Another study that corroborates these findings is conducted by (Şimşek, 2022), which examined the age variable and identified statistically significant differences between the ages of volleyball players and their levels of self-efficacy and burnout. Specifically, it was determined that volleyball players aged 26 and above exhibited higher levels of self-efficacy and burnout compared to those under 26. The study found no statistically significant differences in athletes' levels of sports commitment based on income status. Professional athletes typically have limited career spans and strive to showcase their highest performance during this period. This situation is a significant factor that enhances sports commitment. It can be inferred that both low- and high-income athletes must maintain an equal level of commitment to their sport to optimize their performance, as they need to secure financial stability at the end of their careers.

The review of the literature indicates that studies by (Kusan, 2024) and (Çankaya, 2021) obtained results that align with the findings of the current research. (However, Cvetković et al., 2014) found that sports commitment increases with higher income levels. In the study by (Somoğlu et al., 2023), it was noted that participants with medium income levels demonstrated greater sports commitment compared to those with low income levels. The findings of the study indicate that volleyball players scored higher on the focus subscale compared to football players. This difference in scores is related to the nature and dynamics of the game. Volleyball is a sport that requires constant movement and quick decision-making; therefore, players must have a high ability to intervene with the ball in every position, track the movements of opponents, and respond instantly to the flow of the game. Moreover, the importance of intra-team communication and strategic moves enhances the mental focus of volleyball players. In volleyball, where the outcome of each set is determined by instantaneous decisions, athletes must continuously develop strategies and respond quickly to changes. Psychological factors also play a significant role; the ability of volleyball players to make accurate decisions under high pressure increases the need for focus. Training approaches that emphasize reflex development and attention further reinforce this focus. These structural differences are thought to enable volleyball players to concentrate more mentally on the game and enhance this skill. Despite the lack of research examining athletes from different sports together, (Kelecek and Koruç, 2018) conducted a study on the commitment of football players, revealing that the energy and excitement loss experienced in their athletic lives leads players to perceive sport-specific behaviors as insignificant and to believe these behaviors do not contribute to their individual development. This situation can result in feelings of emotional and physical burnout. On the other hand, (Siyahtaş and Tükenmez, 2020) found that athletes competing in individual sports exhibited higher levels of sport commitment compared to those participating in team sports.

The study found no relationship between athletes' reasons for starting sports and their level of sport commitment. A review of the literature revealed that there has not been any research examining the variable of reasons for starting sports in relation to the commitment levels of team sport athletes. When considering the results of the study, it can be observed that sports provide social interaction and personal development opportunities. Consequently, individuals may increase their commitment through the satisfaction they derive from training and competitions, regardless of their reasons for starting. Personal goals also play a crucial role in commitment; athletes can enhance or diminish their commitment by setting new goals, irrespective of their initial motivations. Moreover, the unique dynamics of different sports may complicate the establishment of a direct relationship between reasons for starting and levels of commitment.

Conclusions

In the study, no statistically significant differences were found between the overall and subscale scores of sports commitment based on the number of years athletes have participated in their respective sports. Contrary to the research findings, (Uzgur et al. 2021) found that athletes with six years or more of sports experience exhibited higher levels of sports commitment compared to those with less than one year of experience. Similarly, (Peke, 2020) identified a relationship between the duration of sports experience and sports commitment in their study. According to the findings of (Uluç and Akçakoyun, 2021), it can be stated that as athletes' years of sports experience increase, their levels of commitment to sports also rise. Based on these results, it can be inferred that athletes with longer participation in sports may lose their commitment for various reasons, while individuals with shorter participation may still exhibit high levels of commitment. This difference may depend on factors such as individual motivation sources, experiences, and physical and psychological conditions.

Recommendations

To enhance the commitment of volleyball, basketball, and football players to their sport, it is crucial to make training programs and sports organizations more participatory and motivation-boosting. Athletes should be encouraged to set personal goals with professional support, and opportunities for personal development should be provided. Strengthening social interactions within the team can enhance team spirit and reinforce commitment. Additionally, performance tracking and feedback should be implemented to monitor athletes' progress. It is anticipated that providing specific training based on these observations will increase the sense of achievement, thereby nourishing athletes motivation. Psychological support programs can enhance athletes' mental resilience and aid in stress management. Improving financial resources can also make training and competition processes more efficient for athletes. Finally, by providing flexible training programs that consider athletes' physical and mental health, the risk of injury can be reduced, and the enjoyment of sports can be enhanced. These recommendations are expected to increase athletes' levels of commitment and support long-term performance development.

Kısaltmalar / Abbreviations

SD Standard deviation

P Statistical Significant Values

Beyanlar / Declarations

Etik Onay ve Katılım Onayı / Ethics approval and consent to participate

Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma ve yazım sürecinde "Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi" kapsamında bilimsel, etik ve alıntı kurallarına uyulmuş olup; toplanan veriler üzerinde herhangi bir tahrifat yapılmamış ve bu çalışma herhangi başka bir akademik yayın ortamına değerlendirme için gönderilmemiştir. Makale ile ilgili doğabilecek her türlü ihlallerde sorumluluk yazara aittir. Bu çalışma, **Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırma Etik Kurulu (2024-347)** tarafından onaylanmış ve izin alınarak gerçekleştirilmiştir

In the preparation and writing process of this study, scientific, ethical, and citation principles outlined in the "Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions" have been strictly followed. No falsification has been made on the collected data, and this study has not been submitted to any other academic publication medium for evaluation. The author assumes full responsibility for any potential violations related to the article. Name of the Committee: Ondokuz Mayıs University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (2024-347)

Veri ve Materyal Erişilebilirliği / Availability of data and material

Bu çalışmanın bulgularını destekleyen veriler, makul talepler üzerine sorumlu yazardan temin edilebilir. Veri seti yalnızca akademik amaçlar için erişilebilir olacak ve verilerin herhangi bir kullanımı, orijinal çalışmayı referans gösterecek ve katılımcıların gizliliğini koruyacaktır.

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The dataset will be accessible only for academic purposes, and any use of the data will recognize the original study and maintain the confidentiality of the participants.

Çıkar Çatışması / Competing interests

Yazarlar, bu makalede sunulan çalışmayı etkileyebilecek herhangi bir çıkar çatışması veya kişisel ilişkiye sahip olmadıklarını beyan etmektedirler.

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Yazar Katkıları / Author contributions

Çalışmanın tasarımı ve planlanması: F.Ö., F.A., İ.Y.; Veri toplama, analiz ve yorumlama: F.A., F.Ö., İ.Y.; Makalenin hazırlanması: F.A., F.Ö., İ.Y.; Veri düzenleme, yöntem geliştirme, yazım – özgün taslak, yazım – gözden geçirme ve düzenleme: F.A., F.Ö., İ.Y.; Tüm yazarlar, makalenin temel noktalarını eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirmiş ve son halini onaylamıştır

The design and planning of the study: F.Ö., F.A., İ.Y.; Data collection, analysis, and interpretation: F.A., F.Ö., İ.Y.; Manuscript preparation: F.A., F.Ö., İ.Y.; Data organization, method development, writing – original draft, writing – review, and editing: F.A., F.Ö., İ.Y.; All authors critically evaluated the key aspects of the manuscript and approved its final version

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