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THE EXAMINATION OF ENGAGEMENT LEVELS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS STUDYING AT THE FACULTY OF SPORTS SCIENCES

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Abstract:
This study aims to investigate the athlete engagement levels of students studying at the Faculty of Sports Sciences. 242 females and 592 males participated in the study. "Athlete Engagement Questionnaire" developed by Lonsdale et al. was used as the data collection tool. Validity and reliability study of the scale in Turkish was carried out by Kelecek et al. (2018). The scale consists of 16 questions and sub-dimensions as trust, commitment, robustness, and enthusiasm. Independent Sample T-Test for comparison of binary groups, One-Way ANOVA for comparison of more than two groups, and Tukey comparison test for the determination of the direction of difference were applied. While there is a significant difference in the dimension of 'enthusiasm' according to the departments of female students, a significant difference is observed in the dimensions of trust, commitment, and enthusiasm for male students ($p<0.05$). Also, while the subdimension of robustness in female students according to their status regarding individual sports or team sports shows a significant difference, the subdimension of enthusiasm in male students differentiates ($p<0.05$). According to the sports age, it is found that there is a significant difference in all sub-dimensions for female students and all sub-dimensions for male students except for commitment ($p <0.05$). According to the result of this study, it can be said that different demographic characteristics affect the engagement of athletes.

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1. Introduction

The examination of athlete engagement in sports environments is critical due to its relationship with performance level (Gould, 2002). Therefore, in accordance with the positive psychology principles in recent years, the concept of engagement taken as the opposite of exhaustion is encouraged as the best method to prevent exhaustion (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). This premise comes from positive psychology principle that wellness includes (not just the disease and the absence of disease) and involves the practicing of the strengths of individuals rather than only weaknesses (Diener, 2003).

The concept of athlete engagement generally has a positive effect on the individual's participation in sports practice and is defined as a result of a relatively stable and permanent sports experience (Lonsdale et al., 2007; Lonsdale et al., 2007). Other studies in the literature emphasize that expert performance results from a deliberate practice in a field, and long-term systematic participation (Ericsson et al., 1993; Martin, 2008). In this sense, it may be of vital importance to examine the role of athletes at different levels of competition, and to understand how they are directed to their mastery skills, and to continue to pursue their sports (Liem & Martin, 2012; Martin, 2008).

Athlete Engagement was defined as characterized by trust, commitment, enthusiasm, and dynamism and a lasting, positive, cognitive-emotional experience (Lonsdale, Hodge, & Raedeke, 2007). In this context, while trust represents "*a belief in a person's ability to achieve high performance and to achieve the desired goals*", commitment refers to "*desire to spend time and effort to achieve goals as a single goal*". Robustness is defined as "*the feeling of physical and mental dynamism*," and enthusiasm is defined as "*emotions of excitement and high entertainment level*" (Lonsdale, Hodge, & Jackson, 2007). Concordantly, when considering the development of sport not only physically but also psychosocially, the purpose of the study that we carried out is to compare the commitment status of individuals according to their sport ages and by considering the gender variable.

2. Material and Methods

In total, 832 students, as 242 females and 592 males, who study in the Faculty of Sports Sciences participated in the study. The data collection tool consists of two parts. In the first part, 'Personal Information Form' prepared in order to obtain students' personal information and "Athlete Engagement Scale" in the second part were used. Questions related to gender, the status of playing individual or team sport, the department that they study, and sport ages takes part in the personal information form. "Athlete Engagement Questionnaire" was developed by Lonsdale, Hodge, and Jackson and the validity and reliability study of the scale in Turkish was carried out by Kelecek et al.

(2018). The scale is 5-point Likert-type and consists of 16 questions and four sub-dimensions as Trust, Commitment, Robustness, and Enthusiasm. The internal consistency coefficients of the sub-dimensions obtained in the validity and reliability study of the scale ranges from 0.75 (Commitment subdimension) to 0.91 (Trust subdimension). In this study, Cronbach Alpha coefficient is between 0.77 and 0.90.

In the study, the fact of whether the data are normally distributed before the statistical analysis was performed was tested and after the conclusion that the data showed normal distribution ($p < 0.05$), Independent Sample T-Test for comparison of binary groups, One-Way ANOVA for comparison of more than two groups, and Tukey comparison test for the determination of the direction of difference were applied. The analyses were done in SPSS package program, and the significance level was taken as 0.05.

3. Results

Table 1: The comparison of the athlete engagement levels of female and male students according to their departments

			n	Average	S.D.	F	p	Difference
Female	Trust	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	82	16,95	2,85	1,068	0,345	
		Sport Management	77	16,34	2,34			
		Coaching Training	83	16,46	3,19			
	Commitment	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	82	15,66	4,13	0,198	0,821	
		Sport Management	77	16,01	2,73			
		Coaching Training	83	15,83	3,62			
	Robustness	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	82	17,34	2,54	0,407	0,666	
		Sport Management	77	16,96	2,05			
		Coaching Training	83	17,04	3,62			
	Enthusiasm	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	82	18,24	2,16	4,307	**0,015**	1>3
		Sport Management	77	17,58	1,79			
		Coaching Training	83	17,01	3,69			
Male	Trust	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	136	16,75	2,70	17,737	**<0,001**	2-1>3
		Sport Management	243	17,23	2,31			
		Coaching Training	213	15,82	2,67			
	Commitment	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	136	15,21	2,87	19,142	**<0,001**	2>1-3
		Sport Management	243	16,57	2,90			
		Coaching Training	213	14,98	3,01			
	Robustness	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	136	16,57	2,71	2,667	0,70	
		Sport Management	243	16,91	2,53			
		Coaching Training	213	16,31	3,12			

	Enthusiasm	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	136	17,22	2,40	7,81	**<0,001**	2>3
		Sport Management	243	17,69	2,06			
		Coaching Training	213	16,77	2,92			

When female and male students' levels of athlete engagement are compared according to departments, it is found that the subdimension of enthusiasm in female students is high in Physical education and sports teaching students and Coaching training students (p=0,015). For male students, it is found that sport management students have higher scores than physical education and sports teaching and coaching training in the subdimension of trust and commitment (p<0,001). As for the subdimension of enthusiasm, sport management students have higher scores than coaching training students (p<0,001).

Table 2: The comparison of athlete engagement subdimensions of individual and team athletes according to gender variable

			n	**Average**	**S.D.**	**t**	**p**
Female	Trust	Team sport	143	16,29	2,87	-1,95	0,05
		Individual sport	99	17,01	2,72		
	Commitment	Team sport	143	15,96	3,31	0,67	0,50
		Individual sport	99	15,65	3,87		
	Robustness	Team sport	143	16,75	3,05	-2,46	**0,02**
		Individual sport	99	17,65	2,38		
	Enthusiasm	Team sport	143	17,50	3,14	-0,79	0,43
		Individual sport	99	17,78	2,01		
Male	Trust	Team sport	365	16,60	2,49	-0,17	0,87
		Individual sport	227	16,63	2,78		
	Commitment	Team sport	365	15,65	2,86	-0,30	0,76
		Individual sport	227	15,73	3,27		
	Robustness	Team sport	365	16,72	2,57	1,07	0,29
		Individual sport	227	16,46	3,14		
	Enthusiasm	Team sport	365	17,53	2,26	3,54	**<0,001**
		Individual sport	227	16,79	2,79		

According to the gender variable, when the athlete engagement subdimensions of students who play individual and team sports are compared, it is seen that they have almost the same score in the individual and team sports branches in female and male athletes. However, while women have high scores in the subdimension of robustness (p = 0,02), it is observed that the students who performed team sports in the subdimension of enthusiasm in the male athletes have higher scores than the students engaged in individual sports (p <0,001).

Table 3: The comparison of athlete engagement levels of female and male athletes according to sport age

			n	Average	S.D.	F	p	Difference
Female	Trust	1-3 years (1)	58	15,47	3,29	7,634	**0,001**	2-3>1
		4-6 years (2)	69	17,36	2,16			
		7 and above years (3)	115	16,69	2,77			
	Commitment	1-3 years (1)	58	14,67	3,97	5,820	**0,003**	3>1
		4-6 years (2)	69	15,61	3,22			
		7 and above years (3)	115	16,55	3,35			
	Robustness	1-3 years (1)	58	16,07	3,89	5,636	**0,004**	2-3>1
		4-6 years (2)	69	17,28	2,22			
		7 and above years (3)	115	17,55	2,37			
	Enthusiasm	1-3 years (1)	58	16,33	3,91	11,072	**<0,001**	2-3>1
		4-6 years (2)	69	17,52	2,03			
		7 and above years (3)	115	18,31	2,09			
Male	Trust	1-3 years (1)	90	15,21	2,82	21,727	**<0,001**	3>2>1
		4-6 years (2)	121	16,21	2,31			
		7 and above years (3)	381	17,07	2,50			
	Commitment	1-3 years (1)	90	15,26	2,92	1,186	0,306	
		4-6 years (2)	121	15,64	2,72			
		7 and above years (3)	381	15,80	3,13			
	Robustness	1-3 years (1)	90	15,80	4,03	6,400	**0,002**	3>1
		4-6 years (2)	121	16,35	2,42			
		7 and above years (3)	381	16,90	2,51			
	Enthusiasm	1-3 years (1)	90	16,43	3,87	13,903	**<0,001**	3>1-2
		4-6 years (2)	121	16,62	2,34			
		7 and above years (3)	381	17,64	2,02			

The statistically significant difference is observed in all sub-dimensions of female athletes when the engagement levels of female and male athletes are compared according to sports age. Groups that create this difference are; in the subdimensions of trust, robustness, and enthusiasm in female athletes, athletes performing 1-3 years and 7 and above years have higher scores than those performing 4-6 years; in the subdimension of commitment, those performing 4-6 years have higher scores than 1-3 years. As for male athletes, it is found that those performing 7 and above years in the subdimension of trust, robustness, and enthusiasm have higher scores than other years ($p<0,05$).

3.1 Discussion

This study was carried out to determine the level of athlete engagement of the students studying in the faculty of sports sciences according to some demographic information. When the engagement of female athletes according to departments is examined, it is found that the enthusiasm subdimension of physical education and sports teaching students is higher than other departments. Physical education departments are the most

preferred departments in the faculties of sports sciences. As well as the curriculum of this department is the same as the all teaching curriculums, only domain-specific courses differ. It can be said that the difference may emerge as a result of the content of the courses taken by the physical education students. In the study done with the women football players by Kelecek and Göktürk (2017), they state that as their commitment to the branch of the sport that they play increases, their level of exhaustion decreases. It can be said that a student's choice is effective in the emergence of this result.

When the subdimensions of the engagement level of the female are were examined, it is found that the robustness subdimension of the athletes performing individual sports have a high score. The practices done with the intent of fulfilling the requirements of the branch in order to focus on high-level success may have an effect on the emergence of this situation (Curran, Hill, Hall and Jowett, 2015). The emergence of the subdimension of enthusiasm found in male team athletes can be explained by the fact that they are satisfied with their personal development and are hopeful for their future sportive performances (Kristensen, 2013). Besides, this sense of enthusiasm can be influential in the development of the feeling of team awareness.

When the effects of the sport years on the engagement status are examined, female athletes with a sport history of 4-6 years are found to have higher scores in "trust", "robustness", and "enthusiasm" subdimensions. Depending on the status of playing sports, some feelings may develop over time. The social and psychological effects of sports may cause this process. The feelings such as competition, winning, and losing on athletes with a sport age of 4-6 years may have an impact on the engagement status. For those who have sports age of 7 years and above, these feelings may decrease because the long-lasting sport has an influence on exhaustion. The fact that male athletes have higher scores in the subdimensions of "trust", "robustness", and "enthusiasm" can be a result of males' point of view that sees sport as a profession. Sport played for many years can be turned into a form of engagement by becoming a profession.

4. Conclusion

Consequently, while significant and meaningful differences are determined in the departments that participants are studying and their sport ages, no significant difference is found in the subdimensions between the engagement to sports scores according to the gender variable. Because of the future plans of the athletes, the departments that they study can be considered as an essential factor for their commitment to sports. Linking the engagement to sports with the sport performance and psychological well-being of the athlete may help future studies.

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