



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOOTBALL FANS' FANATICISM AND THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL COMMITMENT

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Abstract:

This study examined the relationship between football fans' fanaticism levels and their psychological commitments. The sample of the study consisted of a total of 429 volunteer participants in Istanbul, Turkey; 11.7% female and 88.3% male, selected by convenience sampling method. Shapiro – Wilk normality test was applied to test the normality of the study data. Since the data had a normal distribution, descriptive statistics were used for the analysis in addition to independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA tests. Besides, the Pearson correlation test was performed to check the relationship between the scales. The results revealed significant differences in gender, age, marital status, educational status, and favorite football team/club between the sub-scales. The differences were found to be more significant, especially in age and football team variables. It can be said that as the level of fanaticism increases, the psychological commitment of the fans may also increase.

Keywords: football fans, fanaticism, psychological commitment

1. Introduction

The concepts of fanatic, supporter and sports fan have been commonly mentioned in football literature. A person who only watches a sports event is defined as a "spectator," one who has a sense of belonging to a team and follows and supports the athletes on that team is considered a "fan" and a person who is very devoted to a team is defined as a "fanatic" (Taşmektepligil, et al., 2014). Individuals feel rejuvenated and develop a sense of belonging through their commitment and devotion to football teams. Anger, joy, and enthusiasm are interwoven in football, so this sport should be addressed in detail (Talimciler, 2006). Football fans play a critical role in supporting the football industry. The concept of fandom is an urban ritual consisting of individuals who devote

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themselves to their favorite team. Being a member of a football association gives a sense of belonging and happiness and brings a person a sense of social status. Fans play important roles in anything that a club achieves, making it a successful outcome of the efforts of both a club and its fans (Polat, 2016).

Football fanaticism differs across cultures and countries. For example, local teams and fan clubs are prevalent, especially in countries where local governments are dominant actors. People in a given city generally support the team in their city. Geographical and economic characteristics also play a role in football fanaticism (Cengiz, 2014). Today, spectators' and audiences' behavioral dispositions and personality traits have become a subject of discussion on many platforms. Recent years have witnessed undesirable changes in the behaviors of spectators and fans. It can be suggested that football team supporters emerge from psychological and social factors (Türksoy, et al., 2003).

The loyalty of sports fans is different compared to other markets. Fans' repetitive purchasing behaviors and economic contributions to sport clubs benefit the organizations. It also has a positive effect on fans' psychological commitment. However, not everybody in a football crowd in the stadium is a fan or supporter. Team fans have detailed information about their favorite club's history and current state and a high level of commitment to everything related to it (Yıkılmaz, 2017).

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference between the level of fanaticism levels and psychological commitment of the fans according to the gender variable.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference between the level of fanaticism levels and psychological commitment of the fans according to the age variable.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference between the level of fanaticism levels and psychological commitment of the fans according to marital status.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant difference between the level of fanaticism levels and psychological commitment of the fans according to educational status.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant difference between the level of fanaticism levels and psychological commitment of the fans according of the club.

2. Football Fans

When the literature was examined, football fans were divided into more than one group when the literature was examined. Fans, called fanatics, support their teams in all circumstances. Fans are more attached to their teams than fans. Fans truly believe they should participate in the game, not just to observe the event, but to help the team win (Özbaydar, 1983). Especially during a competition, some of the audiences are excited; others just focus on the quality of the game and enjoy the journey. Those who apply the rules of the game, either knowingly or unknowingly, sometimes criticize the referee's decisions or the player's actions. Some focus only on the scores of the goal, as they focus on the goal. However, for the fans, the feelings of victory and defeat are becoming more sympathetic.

3. Fanaticism

The concept of fanaticism has several definitions in the literature. For example, Hunt et al. (1999) classified fans/supporters under five categories: *temporary fans*, who support their teams only under certain conditions; *local fans* who support the teams in their region; *devoted fans* who dedicate themselves to their teams despite challenges or far distance; *fanatical fans* characterized by identification with a sports team or club and lastly *dysfunctional fans* who are sometimes called hooligans. In this sense, fans are more attached to their teams than supporters (İlk et al., 2020) and have egocentric, aggressive, and violent attitudes and behaviors (Kurak, 2020). Fanatic fans are mostly seen in football matches, especially on the day of football events. They support their teams on social media, in the stadium, or anywhere they can gather. Football fanaticism is characterized by spectators who are result-oriented, perceive anything as legitimate to win, do not care too much about the aesthetics and beauty of football, but are obsessed with the symbols of their teams, such as jersey colors and team anthems (Arıkan, 2007; Aak et al., 2018). The fanatical fans are firmly committed to their teams. They always support their team in any situation. The term fanaticism is multidimensional. While it refers to sincere love and commitment to a favorite team, it also expresses extreme and socially unacceptable behaviors, including aggression and violence (Kazan, 2009; Yıldız & Aak, 2018).

4. Psychological Commitment

Psychological commitment refers to the degree of one's decision-making process regarding psychological objects or events despite insufficient objective evidence (Yıkılmaz, 2017). Fanaticism and commitment are concepts that have long been examined. However, little is known about the social and psychological factors that increase commitment to sports teams—behavioral measures of commitment address only repetitive purchasing behaviors (Eskiler et al. 2011). The psychological commitment of fans is acknowledged as a personal commitment or emotional involvement with a sports club (Bozgeyikli et al., 2018). Therefore, sports clubs should know the motivation behind fans' emotional commitment to them. The psychological level of commitment levels of fans affects their commitment behaviors, such as regularly following club matches regularly (Doğru et al., 2021). Clubs who know the motivations of their fans can create better marketing strategies. The knowledge of commitment levels offers opportunities to develop a sensible and non-violent supporter approach and a supply-demand balance (Kartal & İnan, 2018). This study aimed to examine the relationship between football fans' level of fanaticism level and their psychological commitments.

5. Methods and Material

5.1 Research Model

A descriptive survey design for this study was used. Such designs are preferred for studies conducted on large populations to determine individual attitudes and describe a specific event or phenomenon (Karakaya, 2012). The study group was selected using a convenience sampling method, a non-random sampling method.

5.2 Universe and Sample

The universe of the research consists of football fans. The sample of the research consists of 429 football fans in Istanbul, Turkey (50 female and 379 male).

It is more appropriate to use a quantitative research method when researching football fans. As the number of football fans is high, using a qualitative research method requires a longer and more comprehensive process. For this reason, the survey technique was used while working with the fans.

5.3 Data Collection Tools

The study data were collected using a personal information form (including items on gender, age, marital status, educational status, and favorite football club/team), *The Fanaticism Scale for Football Fans (FSFF)*, developed by Taşmektepligil et al. (2015), and *The Scale of Psychological Commitment to Sports Teams (SPCST)*, developed by Matsuoka (2001) and adapted into Turkish by Bozgeyikli et al. (2018).

5.3.1 The Fanaticism Scale for Football Fans (FSFF)

The scale was developed by Taşmektepligil et al. (2015) to measure the fanaticism levels of football fans. It is a four-point Likert-type scale including two sub-scales and 13 items: "Inclination to Violence" (8 items) and "the Sense of Belongingness" (5 items). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the original scale was 0.875.

5.3.2 The Scale of Psychological Commitment to Sports Teams (SPCST)

The instrument was developed by Matsuoka (2001) to determine the psychological commitments of football fans and adapted into Turkish by Bozgeyikli et al. (2018). It consists of 30 items and six subscales: Personal Identity (6 items), Affective Commitment (5 items), Calculative Commitment (4 items), Psychological Cost (4 items), Social Obligation (4 items), and Regional Tribalism (7 items). The reliability coefficient of the scale adapted by Bozgeyikli et al. (2018) was .93.

Table 1: Internal consistency coefficients of sub-scales

Sub-scales	Items	Cronbach's alpha
Fanaticism Scale for Football Fans		
Inclination to violence	8	,84
The sense of belongingness	5	,76
The Scale of Psychological Commitment to Sport Teams		
Psychological cost	4	,73
Personal identity	6	,82
Social obligation	4	,70
Affective commitment	5	,78
Regional tribalism	7	,89
Calculative commitment	4	,72

Table 1 shows Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients of the sub-scales. On the Fanaticism Scale for Football Fans, it was found .84 for "inclination to violence" and .76 for "the sense of belongingness." On the Scale of Psychological Commitment to Sports Teams, the highest coefficient was .89 for the "regional tribalism, while the lowest was .70 for the "social obligation" sub-scale.

Considering the reliability results, the survey data revealed a reliable result.

5.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The survey data were collected online in order to reach more fans. The demographic data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to determine whether the data had a normal distribution, and we observed a normal distribution was observed.

While analyzing the survey data, surveys with missing data were excluded from the scope. If a $p > .05$ value is obtained as a result of the analysis, it is interpreted that the distribution does not show a significant difference from the normal distribution.

Then, independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA tests were performed. The significance level was set at ($p < 0.05$). The analysis was performed through SPSS (Statistics Package for Social Science) 25 version.

6. Findings

Table 2 shows the distribution of demographic information of the participants. According to the analysis results, 88.3% of the participants were "Male," 39.4% were "39 years and older", 58.5% were "Married," 64.6% had "Bachelor's degree," and 32.4% were Beşiktaş fans.

Table 2: The demographic information of the participants

Variables		n	%
Gender	Female	50	11,7
	Male	379	88,3
Age	18-24 years	43	10,0
	25-31 years	87	20,3
	32-38 years	130	30,3
	39 years and older	169	39,4
Marital status	Married	251	58,5
	Single	178	41,5
Educational status	High school	54	12,6
	University	277	64,6
	Masters	98	22,8
Favorite football team/club	Beşiktaş	139	32,4
	Fenerbahçe	119	27,7
	Galatasaray	119	27,7
	Trabzonspor	31	7,2
	Other	21	4,9
	Total	429	100,0

Table 3: The participant distribution by gender

FSFF	Gender	N	Mean	Sd	t	P
Inclination to violence	Female	50	3,22	,50	,814	,416
	Male	379	3,14	,59		
The sense of belongingness	Female	50	2,25	,71	1,118	,264
	Male	379	2,14	,63		
SPCST	Gender	N	Mean	Sd	t	P
Psychological cost	Female	50	3,43	1,14	-2,849	,005
	Male	379	3,84	,93		
Personal identity	Female	50	3,41	,95	-,455	,649
	Male	379	3,47	,93		
Social obligation	Female	50	2,46	,83	-1,634	,103
	Male	379	2,67	,86		
Affective commitment	Female	50	4,08	1,04	-1,607	,109
	Male	379	4,27	,75		
Regional tribalism	Female	50	2,51	,82	-1,196	,232
	Male	379	2,70	1,10		
Calculative commitment	Female	50	3,07	1,02	-2,553	,011
	Male	379	3,45	1,00		

(p<0.05)

Table 3 presents the independent sample t-test results regarding participants' fanaticism and psychological commitment levels by gender. The analysis results revealed significant differences in the "Psychological cost" and "Calculative commitment" sub-scales (p<0.05).

Table 4: The participant distribution by age

FSFF	Age	N	Mean	Sd	f	p
Inclination to violence	18-24 years	43	3,07	,57	3,601	,014
	25-31 years	87	3,12	,56		
	32-38 years	130	3,06	,64		
	39 years and older	169	3,26	,51		
The sense of belongingness	18-24 years	43	2,37	,62	5,678	,001
	25-31 years	87	2,06	,58		
	32-38 years	130	2,02	,63		
	39 years and older	169	2,26	,66		
SPCST	Age	N	Mean	Sd	f	p
Psychological cost	18-24 years	43	3,84	,86	1,629	,182
	25-31 years	87	3,86	,90		
	32-38 years	130	3,89	,93		
	39 years and older	169	3,66	1,05		
Personal identity	18-24 years	43	3,64	,74	2,273	,079
	25-31 years	87	3,40	,92		
	32-38 years	130	3,59	,91		
	39 years and older	169	3,35	,98		
Social obligation	18-24 years	43	2,75	,66	1,163	,324
	25-31 years	87	2,50	,72		
	32-38 years	130	2,65	,86		
	39 years and older	169	2,68	,95		
Affective commitment	18-24 years	43	4,31	,63	4,613	,003
	25-31 years	87	4,35	,59		
	32-38 years	130	4,38	,71		
	39 years and older	169	4,08	,94		
Regional tribalism	18-24 years	43	2,55	,99	3,907	,009
	25-31 years	87	2,54	1,08		
	32-38 years	130	2,53	,95		
	39 years and older	169	2,90	1,15		
Calculative commitment	18-24 years	43	3,48	,96	,494	,687
	25-31 year	87	3,41	,98		
	32-38 years	130	3,47	,99		
	39 years and older	169	3,34	1,06		

(p<0.05)

Table 4 shows the results of a one-way ANOVA analysis to measure the participants' fanaticism and psychological commitment levels by age. Accordingly, there were significant differences between the "Inclination to Violence" and "the sense of belongingness" sub-scales in the FSFF. Similar meaningful differences were found between "Affective Commitment" and "Regional Tribalism" sub-scales in the SPCST (p<0.05).

Table 5: The participant distribution by marital status

FSFF	Marital status	N	Mean	Sd	t	p
Inclination to violence	Married	251	3,20	,58	2,192	,029
	Single	178	3,08	,57		
The sense of belongingness	Married	251	2,18	,64	,936	,350
	Single	178	2,12	,64		
SPCST	Marital status	N	Mean	Sd	t	p
Psychological cost	Married	251	3,77	1,01	-,469	,639
	Single	178	3,82	,91		
Personal identity	Married	251	3,42	,99	-1,166	,244
	Single	178	3,52	,84		
Social obligation	Married	251	2,66	,89	,555	,579
	Single	178	2,61	,81		
Affective commitment	Married	251	4,19	,86	-1,944	,053
	Single	178	4,34	,67		
Regional tribalism	Married	251	2,75	1,10	1,766	,078
	Single	178	2,57	1,03		
Calculative commitment	Married	251	3,42	1,07	,404	,687
	Single	178	3,38	,92		

(p<0.05)

An independent sample t-test was conducted to measure participants' fanaticism and psychological commitment levels by marital status. As seen in Table 5, there was a significant difference between the "Inclination to violence" sub-scale.

Table 6: The participant distribution by educational status

FSFF	Educational status	N	Mean	Sd	f	p
Inclination to violence	High school	54	3,20	,63	,645	,525
	University	277	3,13	,56		
	Master's	98	3,19	,59		
The sense of belongingness	High school	54	2,27	,64	2,614	,074
	University	277	2,10	,61		
	Master's	98	2,24	,70		
TBPÖ	Educational status	N	Mean	Sd	f	p
Psychological cost	High school	54	3,73	1,11	3,383	,035
	University	277	3,88	,92		
	Master's	98	3,58	,98		
Personal identity	High school	54	3,42	1,03	1,462	,233
	University	277	3,52	,91		
	Master's	98	3,33	,93		
Social obligation	High school	54	2,71	,98	1,459	,234
	University	277	2,67	,86		
	Master's	98	2,51	,76		
Affective commitment	High school	54	4,18	,98	1,371	,255
	University	277	4,30	,74		
	Master's	98	4,16	,81		
Regional tribalism	High school	54	2,56	,99	,498	,608
	University	277	2,71	1,11		

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	Master's	98	2,65	1,01		
Calculative commitment	High school	54	3,42	1,02	2,137	,119
	University	277	3,47	1,01		
	Master's	98	3,22	1,00		

(p<0.05)

Table 6 shows the results of a one-way ANOVA test performed to measure the participants' fanaticism and psychological commitment levels by educational status. Accordingly, we found a significant difference in the "Psychological cost" sub-scale.

Table 7: The participant distribution by the favorite football club/team

FSFF	Football Club/team	N	Mean	Sd	f	p
Inclination to violence	Beşiktaş	139	3,04	,59	5,206	,000
	Fenerbahçe	119	3,08	,62		
	Galatasaray	119	3,33	,52		
	Trabzonspor	31	3,13	,46		
	Other	21	3,34	,48		
The sense of belongingness	Beşiktaş	139	1,87	,52	13,299	,000
	Fenerbahçe	119	2,26	,67		
	Galatasaray	119	2,38	,59		
	Trabzonspor	31	2,04	,48		
	Other	21	2,33	,92		
SPCST	Football Club/team	N	Mean	Sd	f	p
Psychological cost	Beşiktaş	139	3,97	,95	2,969	,019
	Fenerbahçe	119	3,71	,93		
	Galatasaray	119	3,67	,96		
	Trabzonspor	31	4,00	,83		
	Other	21	3,41	1,29		
Personal identity	Beşiktaş	139	3,66	,93	4,994	,001
	Fenerbahçe	119	3,35	,90		
	Galatasaray	119	3,31	,92		
	Trabzonspor	31	3,83	,63		
	Other	21	3,09	1,15		
Social obligation	Beşiktaş	139	2,73	,88	1,524	,194
	Fenerbahçe	119	2,53	,84		
	Galatasaray	119	2,70	,90		
	Trabzonspor	31	2,64	,65		
	Other	21	2,38	,83		
Affective commitment	Beşiktaş	139	4,41	,75	4,821	,001
	Fenerbahçe	119	4,14	,75		
	Galatasaray	119	4,15	,75		
	Trabzonspor	31	4,55	,52		
	Other	21	3,88	1,41		
Regional tribalism	Beşiktaş	139	2,42	,89	14,505	,000
	Fenerbahçe	119	2,52	1,00		
	Galatasaray	119	2,73	1,07		
	Trabzonspor	31	3,78	,95		
	Other	21	3,35	1,50		

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Calculative commitment	Beşiktaş	139	3,61	,96	3,025	,018
	Fenerbahçe	119	3,38	1,03		
	Galatasaray	119	3,22	1,04		
	Trabzonspor	31	3,56	,82		
	Other	21	3,14	1,12		

(p<0.05)

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to measure the participants' fanaticism and psychological commitment to their favorite football club/team. The results indicated a significant difference between the sub-scales of "Inclination to violence" and "the Sense of Belongingness." Similar differences were observed between the "Affective commitment," "Regional tribalism," and "Calculative commitment" sub-scales.

Table 8: The correlation between the sub-scales of the FSFF and SPCST

	F1	F2	F3	F4.	F5	F6	F7	F8
F1.	1							
F2	0.569**	1						
F3	-,398**	-,518**	1					
F4	-,485**	-,578**	0.744**	1				
F5	-,328**	-,342**	0.597**	0.603**	1			
F6	-,366**	-,535**	0.760**	0.743**	0.492**	1		
F7	-,078**	-,184**	0.330**	0.417**	0.472**	0.285**	1	
F8	-,499**	-,549**	0.806**	0.739**	0.574**	0.730**	0.308**	1

**($p < 0.01$)

F1: Inclination to violence, F2: the Sense of belongingness, F3: Psychological cost, F4: Personal identity, F5: Social obligation, F6: Affective commitment, F7: Regional tribalism, F8: Calculative commitment

The Spearman Correlation test was performed to determine whether there was a correlation between the sub-scales of both tools ($\alpha=0.01$). The test results revealed a negative low and medium correlation between the sub-scales of both scales. However, there was a positive medium correlation between the sub-scales of the SPCST.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

Globally, football is a popular sport that has given rise to the emergence of several fans and supporter groups. Fanaticism is one of those supporter groups characterized by incredible devotion and passion for a team. Fanatics have higher psychological commitment levels than other groups of supporters. Fanatics with high psychological commitment also have emotional and psychological dispositions. In this sense, we aimed

to examine the relationship between fanaticism and the psychological commitment levels of football fans.

As seen in Table 3, there was a statistically significant difference between psychological cost and calculative commitment sub-scales according to gender. However, no significant difference was found in fanaticism by gender. Similar findings in the literature were reached. Tanyeri (2019) indicated a difference according to gender regarding being a football fan. Similarly, Durgutluoğlu (2020) pointed out a significant difference in psychological commitment levels according to gender.

As shown in Table 4, we found significant differences in fanaticism and psychological commitment levels according to gender were found. For example, there were meaningful differences between the "Inclination to Violence" and "the Sense of belongingness" sub-scales in the FSFF and between the "Affective Commitment" and "Regional Tribalism" sub-scales in the SPCST. Doğaner et al. (2021) measured a difference in the participants' fanaticism according to age. However, in a study by Kartal and İnan (2018), no difference was observed in psychological commitment levels according to age.

According to the analysis results to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between fanaticism and psychological commitment levels according to marital status, there was a difference in the "inclination to violence" sub-scale (see Table 5). Yıkılmaz (2017) found no significant difference in psychological commitment levels according to marital status. Similarly, Açak et al. (2018) found no significant difference in fanaticism according to marital status.

As seen in Table 6, there was a significant difference in participants' calculative commitment according to educational status. Accordingly, the participants with a bachelor's degree had higher scores than others. In a study conducted by Yıkılmaz (2017), a significant difference was found in being fanatic according to educational status.

Additionally, in terms of being a fanatic and psychologically committed to a football club/team, we found significant differences between the sub-scales of "Inclination to violence" and "the Sense of Belongingness." Similar differences were observed between the "Affective commitment" and "Regional tribalism" sub-scales. In a study by Tanyeri (2019), there was no difference between football fanaticism and favorite football club/team. However, Goksel et al. (2020) found a significant difference in psychological commitment levels by the favorite club.

In conclusion, football fans' fanaticism and psychological commitment levels varied according to their socio-demographic characteristics. Notably, fanaticism levels differed according to the clubs/teams they supported.

As a result, the level of fanaticism of football fans varies according to socio-demographic characteristics. Fans with high psychological commitment give more support to their teams and can follow them more loyally. The fanatical fans especially their teams in all conditions. It is predicted that as a fan's psychological commitment increases, fanaticism may increase even more.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Çağrı İlk
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