



## An Investigation of the Sports Awareness of Employees in Sports Management According to Several Variables

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to raise the awareness of public employees in sports administration through various types of training to measure the awareness of public employees working in sports administration regarding sports, as well as to reveal the problems facing sports in Turkey from the perspective of those working in sports administration. The research was carried out with a mixed methods convergent parallel design of the questionnaire variant. The study population consists of employees working in the central and provincial organizations of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the sample consists of 581 people working under different titles determined by the convenience sampling method. SPSS 24 and NVIVO 10 package programs were used for data analysis. The findings show that the awareness of those working in sports management is higher among men than women, that for those who have just started their professional life, it is higher than for others, and that those who have been working in sports management for a long time increase their awareness over time. The most critical problems of Turkish sports are stated as lack of infrastructure, lack of merit, lack of sustainable sports policy, discontinuity of studies, insufficient sports awareness education, and insufficient awareness of directing children to sports at an early age.

## INTRODUCTION

Sport, an area as old as the history of humankind, was first seen as a means of entertainment and a struggle against life. However, over time it has gained an economic, political, social, and cultural dimension, and has become an effective tool in the national and international arenas (Loy et al., 1981; Yetim, 2000). Today, sport has become a branch of science that develops individuals in social, cognitive, affective, and physical aspects through games, movement, and competition (Erkal et al., 1998; Yetim, 2000). For some, sport is seen as a game, or a distraction from work. In contrast, for others, it is seen as an occupation, or an entertaining individual or collective pursuit pursued in free time. In addition, people engage in sports to socialize, propaganda, education, culture, and health in different countries and to make it a lifestyle (Yetim, 2000). The most essential condition to achieve this is a good sports management and a sports policy that gives importance to sports. Good sports management depends on managers with high sports knowledge and awareness, who can distinguish this knowledge, and who are aware of sports' social and individual benefits. A good sports policy can only be created by people with these characteristics.

Turkey is one of the few countries where sport is under state control. This situation has made the intervention of political actors in sports inevitable. The influence of political powers has shaped the managerial staff managing sports. Even though there is an intervention in this way, it is expected that people with a high level of sports knowledge, who will contribute positively to the development of sports and who know the social and individual benefits of sports, should be selected as administrators, and employment in public sports administration should be made in this direction (Yetim & Şenel, 2001; Fişek, 1999; Heinemann, 2005). The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey gives the state the duty to improve the physical and mental health of Turkish citizens of all ages, encourage the spread of sports to the masses, and protect successful athletes. The Ministry of Youth and Sports is authorized to fulfill this duty. What is expected from the institution tasked with managing sports is that it should work with experts in the field who have an excellent knowledge of sports and a thorough knowledge and awareness of the social and individual benefits of sports.

The starting point of an individual's development and transformation throughout his/her life is to become aware of himself/herself (Karakuş, 2008). Awareness is a cognitive and affective activity defined as the elevation that an individual feels in his/her emotions in his/her daily life; certain definitions of mindfulness deal with the concept regarding basic cognitive processes. Awareness is defined as a specific, open and receptive form of

consciousness in which stimuli are not evaluated, classified and analyzed (Çatak & Ögel, 2010). In another definition, mindfulness is explained in a three-part model of intention, attention and attitude components. The intention component in the definition refers to the desire to focus on the momentary experience here and now, the attention component refers to the continuous organization of attention to observe momentary experiences, and the attitude component refers to the characteristics of the approach to momentary experiences, such as openness, acceptance and neutrality. According to this model explaining mindfulness, mindfulness causes a number of changes, such as self-regulation, clarification of values, cognitive and behavioral flexibility and exposure through a meta-mechanism called 'reperception' (Shapiro et al., 2005). In summary, mindfulness is the individual's awareness of what and how he/she is experiencing while coming into contact with another individual or with his/her environment with all his/her senses (Acar, 2009).

Sport is a socializing, competitive, solidarity, unifying activity and cultural phenomenon that contributes to the economy, social and cultural development, physical health, personality and character development, solidarity and cohesion in societies, as well as global peace. It aims to gain superiority by fighting within the framework of certain rules, and it is a socializing, competitive, solidarity, unifying activity and cultural phenomenon that people do individually or collectively as a leisure time activity or professionally in a professional sense (Yetim, 2000). Movement is central to physical education, sports, games and life (Mirzeoğlu, 2011). Concepts such as realizing, noticing, and being aware of oneself indicating human cognitive competencies, affective characteristics, and psychomotor skills. Human beings can distinguish what they know, what they think and how they feel when they come into contact with themselves and their environment by using all their sense organs, and they can apply them at any moment of their lives in line with their wishes and needs (source). Awareness in physical education and sports is the time that extends from the past to the future, including cognitive, affective and psychomotor areas, but where the individual's selectivity in the moment of his/her life is realized (Eski, 2010).

Individuals involved in sports as athletes, managers or officials in different branches are expected to have a good awareness of the social and individual benefits of sports, sports education and sports literacy. They are also expected to be aware of the systemic problems in sports. In the literature, there are numerous studies on sports in Turkey from different perspectives. A thesis study conducted in Turkey between 2000 and 2019 showed that studies on athletes, sports managers, university students and sports consumers, respectively, are intensive. However, there are few studies in which sports spectators/fans, academicians,

coaches, managers, physical education teachers, sports center employees, secondary school students, high school students and referees are sampled (Biricik, 2020). Similarly, Yavuz et al. (2018) concluded in their study that most of the theses in the field of sports management were conducted with sector representatives as the study group. Atalay (2017) examined the trends of sports management research and found that the articles' most frequently studied sample groups which were composed of athletes, sports managers and university students. It can be seen that these studies mostly focus on individuals' attitudes and behavior towards sports, opinions on sports, sports participation behavior, sports management and ethical values, problems of sports, the relationship between sports and politics, the functioning of sports management, and individuals' perspectives on sports.

In line with all these determinations, when the literature research is examined, it can be seen that the institutional reforms carried out in the Turkish sports system have been variously studied: critically examined in a multidimensional way (Başar & Yenel, 2021); the relationship between sports and politics is examined (İnce, 2016; Karataş, 2014); the characteristics that should be found in the sports manager are examined (Sunay, 2017); the necessity of raising qualified individuals in the spread of sports to society (Yüce & Sunay, 2019); sports policies and sustainability are examined (Balcı et al., 2018); sports policies (Sivrikaya & Demir, 2019; Eroğlu et al., 2016); attitudes and opinions of individuals towards sports (Adıgüzel, 2020; Diker, 2021; Dinç et al., 2020; Koçak, 2014; Turhan et al., 2021; Yavuz & Yücel, 2019; Yetim & Kalfa, 2019); qualifications of sports managers (Bilgi & Ay, 2019; Eren et al., 2016; Etlik et al., 2019; Gündoğdu & Sunay, 2018; Öksüz, 2018; Sunay & Çaycı, 2008; Şahan & Şirin, 2022; Yetim et al., 2015); opinions and evaluations on sports management (Işıkgöz & Taşkiran, 2015; Özen et al., 2012; Sağır, 2021; Türkmen & Eroğlu, 2018); social and individual benefits of sports (Karataş et al., 2021; Yıldız & Çetin, 2018); sports knowledge and literacy (Demir et al., 2019; Jawad, 2022; Ülker, 2019); findings on sports infrastructure (Karataş et al., 2011; Nacar & Devocioğlu, 2018); opinions regarding sports administrators (Beşler et al., 2022); approaches of sports administrators towards ethical values (Yavuz, 2020; Yıldız, 2016); and sports awareness and consciousness (Kaplan & Akkaya, 2015; Özer & Çolakoğlu, 2017). These studies stand out as research that addresses sports, sports administrators, sports-politics relationship, sports management, problems in sports, and athletes in many aspects. All of these are literature studies directly or indirectly related to sports awareness, sports knowledge, and the social and individual benefits of sports. This study examines the sports awareness of the employees of public institutions and organizations responsible for managing sports, and reveals how it changes according to different variables. It also reflects the determination and

opinions of these employees regarding the problems in sports management. Within the scope of this study, answers to the following questions were sought:

- How does the awareness of employees in sports management towards sport change according to certain variables?
- What are the main problems of sports in Turkey according to employees in sports management?

## METHODS

The research has been carried out using a mixed methods convergent parallel design questionnaire to determine awareness of sports and to understand the problems of sports in depth. This model, in its questionnaire variant, is a research approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of a research question or topic. In this design, researchers use surveys or questionnaires to gather quantitative data and collect qualitative data through open-ended questions or interviews. A convergent parallel design involves the simultaneous execution of both quantitative and qualitative aspects during a single phase of the research process. The researcher gives equal importance to both methods, independently analyzes the outcomes of each component, and subsequently combines and interprets the results collectively. The goal is to bring together the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a more holistic perspective on the research issue. In other words, convergent parallel design consists of taking quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis and comparing or relating the two and then interpreting those (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

Quantitative data collection through surveys or questionnaires helps researchers gather structured and numerical data from a larger sample, allowing for statistical analysis and generalizability. Qualitative data collection, on the other hand, through open-ended questions or interviews, provides in-depth insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and contextual information that quantitative data might not capture. The two sets of data are collected in parallel and then integrated during the analysis phase, where researchers compare, contrast, and connect findings from both methods to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

### *Study Group*

The population of the study consisted of 60,931 personnel working in the central and provincial organizations of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which is the official authority

responsible for sports management in Turkey (Table 1). The sample of the study consisted of 581 people who were determined by the convenience sampling method among the personnel working in different titles in the central and provincial organizations of the Ministry. The convenience sampling method is the inclusion of anyone who wants to be included in the sample. The process of finding subjects continues until the determined sample volume is reached, and it is a method that provides great savings in terms of time and economy (Ural & Kılıç, 2011). Of the distributed data collection tools, 581 (100%) were returned properly completed. Considering the 95% confidence interval and 4.05% margin of error for the research population, the required sample size was calculated as 580. It was seen that the sample group reached was above the 580 participants required for the analysis. It was therefore concluded that the current sample was sufficient to make generalizations for all personnel working in the central and provincial organizations of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (Bartlett et al., 2001; Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

**Table 1**  
Demographic Data of the Study Group

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	189	32.5
	Male	392	67.5
Age	25-29	76	13.1
	30-34	140	24.1
	35-39	134	23.1
	40-45	119	20.5
	Over 45	112	19.3
	Graduate status	Associate Degree	86
	Undergraduate	404	69.5
	Master's Degree/PhD	91	15.7
Job Title	Trainer	142	24.4
	Director	117	20.1
	Sports Specialist	74	12.7
	Dormitory Management Staff	73	12.6
	Security Guard	53	9.1
	Technician	21	3.6
	Youth Worker	17	2.9
	Chief	13	2.2
	Cleaning Staff	12	2.1
	Worker	11	1.9
	Officer	11	1.9
	IT Personnel	9	1.5
	Office Personnel	6	1.0
	Physiotherapist	5	.9
	DPCO	4	.7
	Dietician	3	.5
	Assistant Director	3	.5
	Psychologist	3	.5
Teacher	2	.3	
Researcher	1	.2	
Press Officer	1	.2	

**Table 2 (Continued)**

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Unit of Employment	Center	246	42.3
	Rural	335	57.7
Relationship with sports	I do not partake in sports	209	36
	Unlicensed Athlete	162	27.9
	Licensed Athlete	210	36.1
	Total	581	

The research was carried out with the approval of Gazi University Ethics Committee numbered 2022/482 and the permission of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Turkey dated 29.04.2022 and numbered 2393643. The participants were accessed by way of the Internet through an easily accessible sampling method. All participants were informed about the possible risks and benefits of the study, and written consent was obtained from them at the beginning of the study. The study was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration which protocol conforms to the ethical guidelines of the 1975 Declaration of Helsinki. In addition, written consent forms were obtained from all participants, who were completely informed about the study.

#### *Data Collection Tools*

Personal characteristics, an information form with three open-ended questions and the Sports Awareness Scale (SAS) developed by Uyar and Sunay (2020) were used to collect research data. In the personal information form in the first part of the data collection tool, there are eleven personal information items and three open-ended questions to determine the gender, age, marital status, educational status, professional experience, job title, unit of employment, monthly income, province of residence, relationship with sports, and reason for choosing the profession.

The participants were asked the open-ended questions, 'What is your reason for choosing to work in a unit related to sports? What do you think the saying 'Sports should be managed by those who understand sports' means? What do you think is the most important problem of Turkish sports?', and they were asked to express their opinions briefly. These open-ended questions were analyzed by two researchers who are experts in the field of sports sciences with the literature on the subject being examined, and a list of possible questions was made. In total, four questions emerged. The content and structural appropriateness of the questions were evaluated separately by two experts in the field of sports sciences and one expert in the field of measurement and evaluation, and a consensus was formed on three questions, with one question being removed because it was found to be independent of the subject.

The second part of the data collection tool, the Sport Awareness Scale (SAS) developed by Uyar and Sunay (2020), consists of thirty items and two sub-dimensions. The dimensions of the scale are named 'Sports Knowledge and Distinguishing Knowledge' and 'Social and Individual Benefit'. According to the psychometric properties calculated while developing the scale, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for the whole scale was 0.937, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients calculated for each sub-dimension were 0.947 and 0.851, respectively. In addition, the EFA and CFA analyses revealed that the scale had sufficient validity values. The scale is a 5-point Likert scale with a minimum score of thirty and a maximum score of one hundred and fifty. For the current study, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability value for the entire scale was calculated to be 0.987. The statements in the scale consisting of thirty items related to awareness, all of which contained positive statements, are in the form of 'Strongly Agree (5)', 'Agree (4)', 'Moderately Agree (3)', 'Disagree (2)', 'Strongly Disagree (1)' in the five-point Likert type. The higher the score obtained from the scale, the higher the level of sports awareness, and the lower the score obtained from the scale, the lower the level of sports awareness.

#### *Data Collection Process*

Permission was obtained from the General Directorate of Education, Research and Coordination of the Ministry of Youth and Sports for the implementation of the data collection tool consisting of the personal information form and the SPSS. In line with this permission, an online survey form was created from the personal information form and scale items. A survey link was created to participate in the online survey. The survey link was shared with all the personnel working in the central and provincial organizations of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and participation in the survey was requested on a voluntary basis. 581 people participated in the survey. Analyses were carried out with the data of these employees.

#### *Data Analysis*

In this study, which was conducted to examine the sports awareness of employees working in sports management in public institutions and organizations according to different variables, both analyses were made according to the quantitative paradigm, and the data obtained from the interview questions were examined by content analysis. The continuous variables in the quantitative part were examined with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test in terms of normality, and it was seen that the data obtained met this assumption ( $p > 0.05$ ). For this reason, the analyses were conducted with parametric difference tests, t-tests and an ANOVA test. The data obtained through interview questions were analyzed by content analysis. SPSS 24 and NVIVO 10 package programs were used for the analysis.



### *Research Credibility*

Credibility or authenticity in qualitative research is based on the skills, experiences, and sensitivities of the researcher, in how he or she uses herself as a knower and as an inquirer (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). To enhance the credibility of our study, data triangulation was employed through interviews and field notes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Field notes assisted in generating keywords, identifying codes, and naming themes. Considering analyst triangulation, researchers reviewed the findings of the study and discussed the results in regular meetings with interpretations of the data. To enable transferability, direct quotations were used in the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

## RESULTS

In this study, the mean scores of sports awareness of employees working in sports management in public institutions and organizations were examined in terms of gender, age, marital status, educational status, professional experience, unit of employment, monthly income, sports relationships, and whether the participants chose a profession they wanted to be in. Table 2 shows the t-test results for the variables of gender, marital status, unit, and whether the participants had chosen a profession they would like to be in.

**Table 3**

T-Test Results of Participants' Sport Awareness Mean Scores According to Related Variables

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	SD	t	p
<b>Gender</b>	Female	189	101.86	28.99	-3.25	.001
	Male	392	110.79	34.93		
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	422	107.52	33.43	-.43	.665
	Single	159	108.86	33.27		
<b>Unit of employment</b>	Center	246	106.74	32.46	-.71	.479
	Rural	335	108.73	34.03		
<b>Are you in the profession you want to be?</b>	Yes	371	111.02	34.62	3.03	.003
	No	210	102.35	30.31		

When Table 2 is examined, it can be seen that the sports awareness of the people working in sports management in public institutions and organizations shows a statistically significant difference according to gender ( $t(439,68) = -3,25, p < 0,05$ ). It was concluded that the sports awareness of male participants ( $\bar{X} = 110,79$ ) was higher than that of female participants ( $\bar{X} = 101,86$ ). It can be seen that the participants' sports awareness does not show a statistically significant difference according to whether they are married or single ( $t(579) = -0,43, p > 0,05$ ) or whether they work in the center or province ( $t(579) = -0,71, p > 0,05$ ). Another finding obtained from Table 2 is that there is a statistically significant difference ( $t(579) = 3,03, p < 0,05$ )

as a result of examining the sport awareness averages of the people working in sport management according to whether they chose a profession they wanted to be in or whether they chose this profession due to circumstances. When the sports awareness averages were examined, it was found that the awareness of those in the profession they wanted to be in ( $\bar{X} = 110,2$ ) was higher than those in this profession due to circumstances ( $\bar{X} = 102,35$ ). An ANOVA test analyzed the mean scores of the participants sports awareness in terms of age, educational status, professional experience, monthly income and relationship status with sports. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of these variables.

**Table 4**

Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Sport Awareness Scores According to Age, Education Level, Professional Experience, Monthly Income and Relationship with Sports

	Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SS
<b>Age</b>	25-29	76	114.43	30.299
	30-34	140	111.57	31.06
	35-39	134	107.15	33.04
	40-45	119	105.38	35.60
	Over 45	112	102.38	35.31
<b>Educational status</b>	Associate Degree	86	100.66	37.34
	Licence	404	106.84	33.24
	MSc/Dr	91	119.36	26.83
<b>Professional experience</b>	1-4 years	126	108.45	33.37
	5-9 years	160	108.84	32.37
	10-14 years	124	104.39	34.27
	15-20 years	64	116.13	29.57
	20 years and over	107	104.91	35.44
<b>Monthly income</b>	Less than 5,000₺	46	109.93	25.51
	Between 5,000-10,000 ₺	421	106.92	34.20
	Between 10,000-20,000 ₺	107	110.45	32.58
	Over 20,000 ₺	5	114.00	44.98
<b>Relationship with sports</b>	Licensed Athlete	210	117.32	34.81
	Unlicensed Athlete	162	111.29	34.48
	I do not partake in any sport	209	95.76	26.81

When Table 3 is examined, it can be seen that the mean sport awareness scores of sport management employees aged between 25-29 years are higher than those of older age groups, and the average decreases as the age increases. When analyzed in terms of professional seniority, it was found that the group with the highest sports awareness average was the group with 15-20 years of seniority, and the sport awareness averages of all other seniority employees were close to each other. When the sports awareness averages are analyzed according to the monthly income variable, it can be seen that the awareness of the group with the highest monthly income is also the highest. When the sports awareness averages of the participants according to their relationship with sports are examined, it is found that the awareness

averages of those who are interested in sports with or without a license are higher than those who are not interested in sports at all. An ANOVA test was applied to test the statistical significance of the differences between these averages, and the results are given in Table 4.

**Table 5**

The ANOVA Results of Sports Awareness of Sport Management Employees in Terms of Age, Educational Status, Professional Experience, Monthly Income and Sport-Related Variables

Variables	Source of variance	Sum of squares	SD	Mean of squares	F	p
<b>Age</b>	Between groups	9,383	4	2,345	2.124	.076
	Within groups	636,060	576	1,104		
	Total	645,443	580			
<b>Educational status</b>	Between groups	16,917	2	8,458	7.779	.000
	Within groups	628,525	578	1,087		
	Total	645,443	580			
<b>Professional experience</b>	Between groups	6,999	4	1,749	1.579	.178
	Within groups	638,443	576	1,108		
	Total	645,443	580			
<b>Monthly income</b>	Between groups	1,476	3	492.006	.441	.724
	Within groups	641,128	575	1,115		
	Total	642,604	578			
<b>Relationship to sports</b>	Between groups	51,309	2	25,654	24.958	.000
	Within groups	594,133	578	1,027		
	Total	645,443	580			

When Table 4 is examined, it can be seen that there is no statistically significant difference between the participants' sports awareness mean scores according to age, professional experience, and monthly income ( $F(4,576) = 2,124, p > 0,05$ ;  $F(4,576) = 1,579, p > 0,05$ ;  $F(3,575) = 0,441, p > 0,05$  respectively). However, when the mean sports awareness score of sports management employees was analyzed in terms of educational status, a statistically significant difference was found between the groups  $F(2,578) = 7,779, p < 0,05$ . A Scheffe test was performed to find the differentiation of the mean score of sports awareness according to educational status between groups. According to the results obtained, it was concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between master or doctorate graduates and bachelor's and associate degree graduates and that the sports awareness of master/doctorate graduates ( $\bar{X} = 119.36$ ) was higher than that of bachelor graduates ( $\bar{X} = 106.84$ ) and associate degree ( $\bar{X} = 100.66$ ) graduates. Similarly, when the mean sports awareness score was analyzed regarding the participants' relationship with sports, a statistically significant difference was found between the groups  $F(2,578) = 24,958, p < 0,05$ . A Scheffe test was performed to find between which groups the differentiation of the mean score of sports awareness according to the relationship with sports was. According to the results

obtained, it was found that the sports awareness of people who are athletes, regardless of whether they are licensed ( $\bar{X} = 117.32$ ) or unlicensed ( $\bar{X} = 111.29$ ), is higher than those who do not partake in sports ( $\bar{X} = 95.76$ ), and there is no statistically significant difference between licensed or unlicensed athletes in terms of sports awareness.

The employees were asked the open-ended question, 'What is your reason for choosing to work in a sports-related unit?'. When the answers given by the participants are analyzed, it can be seen that the keywords love, related, happy, athlete, train, work, active, healthy, and useful come to the fore. Based on these keywords, the participants associated working in a sports-related unit with loving sports, being interested in sports, being interested in sports gives happiness, training athletes, sports being a job, being actively involved in sports, staying healthy by engaging in sports, and finding sports helpful. The content analysis of the answers given by 580 participants for the reasons for working in a sports-related unit is given in Table 5.

**Table 6**  
Reasons, Why People Working in Sports Management Chose, Choose to Work in This Field

Themes	Frequency	Percentage	Sample Case
<b>Internal Causes</b>	387	66,72	K1: I want to stay active and live actively. K33: To be more active and energetic and to be more useful to people K162: Dealing with sports, which is one of the most important parts of my life, and doing what I am happy with and what I love K178: "I like being interested in sports and dealing with sports-related work and transactions. K221: Completely because I like this environment. K381: To live a healthy and happy K403: Everything related to sports gives me life. It gives me incredible happiness and determination to work
<b>External Causes</b>	193	33,28	K18: Due to our duty K23: It developed completely out of my own will K146: Because of my job K240: It was not my own choice, but life conditions K358: Money K373: The conditions of the country made it compulsory to work at the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Unfortunately, in the Republic of Turkey, no one can work in the profession they are trained for
<b>Total</b>	580	100	

When Table 5 is examined, it can be seen that the reasons for choosing to work in sports management in public institutions and organizations are grouped under two main themes

when examined by content analysis. These themes are listed as internal reasons (66.72%) and external reasons (33.28%), from the one with the most content to the one with the most minor content. Most of the participants explained the reason for working in a sports unit with intrinsic reasons and made explanations such as that they love sports, that sports make them happy, and that they have always been involved in sports. For the intrinsic reasons that led the participants to work in a sports unit, they stated the following opinions: "I want to stay active and live actively"; "To be more active and energetic and to be more useful to people"; and "To be happy with sports, which is one of the most important parts of my life, and to do what I love". Those who explained their work in a sports unit with external reasons stated that they chose to work in this unit primarily out of necessity, obligation and because they could not find any other solution. Five hundred eighty participants were asked in an open-ended way what the phrase, 'Sports should be managed by those who understand sports' means to them. When the keywords created from the answers given by the participants are analyzed, it can be seen that the words right, competent, competent, I agree, merit, knowledge is essential, and experience stand out. Based on these keywords, the participants emphasized that sports should be managed by knowledgeable, skillful, and meritorious people who understand and come from within sports. The content analysis of the answers given by 580 participants working in sport management units for the opinions of the participants is given in Table 6.

When 580 participants were asked what the statement, 'Sports should be managed by those who understand sports' means to them, they all agreed with this idea. However, when analyzed by content analysis, the reasons for the participant's participation in the relevant states are different, and, in this context, it can be seen that the opinions are grouped under three themes. These themes are a necessity of experience, the importance of knowledge, and an awareness of needs. More than half of the participants (51.38%) responded that sports should be managed by those who understand sports through the necessity of experience. They emphasized that people with sports experience will understand sports and athletes better when they are managers and the importance of being competent and 'coming from the kitchen'. 33.1% of the participants emphasized the importance of knowledge rather than experience. It was emphasized that the sports manager should know the job, should be educated, and that sports should be seen as a science. 15.52% of the participants justified that sports should be managed by those who understand sports so they can realize their needs. They emphasized this idea with the view that an athlete has a better communication with an athlete.

**Table 7**

Participants' Views on the Statement 'Sports Should Be Managed by Those Who Understand Sports

Themes	Frequency	Percentage	Sample case
<b>Experience Requirement</b>	298	51.38	<p>K13: No one knows what an athlete goes through except the athlete. This is called experience, and those who know the problems best are those who have experience. Such people can solve the source of the problem.</p> <p>K36: Experience is essential</p> <p>K169: I do not think that a person who has not been an athlete understands the psychology of athletes</p> <p>K178: Someone who does not come from sports cannot manage sports</p> <p>K196: It is important to 'come up through the ranks</p> <p>K212: They are the people who know the sport, who have practiced the sport, and who sweated for the branch. Therefore, this group should be the ones who govern. When it comes to talking, everyone understands sports</p> <p>K254: Managers should be people who have come from within sports and have a background in sports or coaching, and are competent in their job</p> <p>K385: It is appropriate to have people who have a background in sports and who have a good command of the branch they will manage</p> <p>K429: There should be officials with experience in every profession</p> <p>K547: I believe that if there are managers with experience and open horizons, sports and labor will be rewarded</p>
<b>Importance of Knowledge</b>	192	33.10	<p>K52: Having received training</p> <p>K165: It would be better for those who have a lot of sports knowledge</p> <p>K235: The people who manage sports should rise from the ranks and should know the problems at every point and the facts that need to be improved</p> <p>K352: Let those who know the job manage</p> <p>K412: The one who knows a job should do it</p> <p>K445: People who have received training should manage more accurately and more efficiently, or those who understand sports should manage more successful athletes</p> <p>K510: He states that sports are now a serious business and even a science and that the management has to understand this business</p> <p>K572: Giving the job to the competition ensures that the job is done following its purpose. If you do not know how to use a medicine, it turns into poison</p>
<b>Needs Awareness</b>	90	15.52	<p>P74: I can describe him/her as a person who knows sports and athletes and who can recognize their needs</p> <p>P184: I believe that he/she will solve the needs of athletes faster</p> <p>K276: The athlete understands the language of the athlete</p> <p>P327: It means that it is essential for sports administrators to come from within sports and to know the requirements and needs of sports in order to develop sports</p>
<b>Total</b>	580	100	

The participants were asked in an open-ended way what they thought was the most important problem facing Turkish sports. When the keywords created from the answers given by the participants are examined, the following words, lack of infrastructure, lack of merit, lack of importance to sports, tropical, no support, lack of education, lack of facilities, lack of athletes, and lack of coaches, stand out. Based on these keywords, the participants emphasized infrastructure inadequacies, lack of importance given to sports, the existence of favoritism and acceleration in the selection of those who will work in sports management, insufficient support for sports, problems in training athletes, lack of education in sports and lack of coaches. The content analysis of 580 participants' responses to the question is given in Table 7.

**Table 8**

Opinions of the participants about what is the most important problem of Turkish sports

Themes	Frequency	Percentage	Sample case
<b>Systemic Problems</b>	395	68.10	K28: Lack of infrastructure K103: Lack of merit K176: Inadequate facility materials K224: Lack of infrastructure and adequate training K296: The fact that our education system and sports fields cannot be integrated K304: Uninformed people governing K346: Sports are managed by individuals, groups, communities, or their demands. It is always based on the management aspect and on not seeing everything. K382: Not giving importance to infrastructure and not supporting talented athletes K413: Overlapping with the education system and not providing the necessary support and discipline to individuals who are or who want to be athletes K437: Not giving the necessary importance to infrastructure, lack of supervision, and organization K456: People without merit and those who do not know how to work come to power K485: Respect for sports ethics and not directing children to sports from a young age, and there are no guiding activities related to sports education. K502: Turkish sport is shown as if it is only about football. K522: Our country has no sports policy. K551: The fact that administrators are unqualified, coaches do not like their jobs, and the lack of viable sports policies in the long term.
<b>Individual Problems</b>	185	31.90	K23: Not updating oneself K195: Not enough training K201: We do not know and love how to lose K254: They are impatient K337: Not being open to development K365: Laziness, indiscipline K421: Not being played regularly and continuously K463: Respect K562: No one cares too much
<b>Total</b>	580	100	

When Table 7 is examined, it can be seen that the opinions of the employees working in sports management in public institutions and organizations on the most important

problems of Turkish sports are gathered under two main themes when analyzed by content analysis. 68,10% of the participants explained the problems in Turkish sports as systemic problems, while 31,90% mentioned individual problems. The participants mentioned a lack of infrastructure, merit problems, facilities and materials, and administrative deficiencies as systemic problems. Regarding another theme, individual problems, 185 participants emphasized individual problems, such as not doing enough work, laziness, and a lack of discipline, as the most important problem of Turkish sports.

## DISCUSSION

During this study, in the analysis made according to the gender variable, it was seen that the sports awareness of male participants was higher than that of females. According to the age variable, the sports awareness of the participants in the range of 25-29 years was higher than the other age groups. In terms of the duration of employment (years of seniority), it was seen that those with 15-20 years of seniority had higher awareness than the others. It can be said that the knowledge of newcomers to the profession is more up to date, but their sports awareness is less, and their sports awareness increases over time. In the answers given to the research questions asked to the participants within the scope of the study, the participants emphasized that those who manage sports and those working in sports management should be experienced and have knowledge and experience in the field of sports. They stated that people with merit should manage sports in terms of knowledge and experience. The participants stated that the problems in Turkish sports are a lack of infrastructure, a lack of merit, a lack of sustainable sports policy, a discontinuity of studies, and an insufficient awareness of directing children to sports early in society. It can be seen that there are similar results to these results in the literature.

Karaküçük (1988) states that just as a country's development in other fields can be attributed to managers who have trained themselves in their chosen fields, the knowledge, and skills of sports managers should be sufficient based on that country's success in sports. Gözen and Yenel (2022), in their study examining the views of academics on the effects of the soft power of sports on influencing and transforming societies, emphasized a lack of organizational and structural deficiencies in the Presidential Government System and stated the necessity of addressing the organization and election systems, especially merit, within this structuring. This result overlaps with the findings on merit in this study. Türkmen and Eroğlu (2018), in their study evaluating sports management in Turkey, based on the views of sports administrators, addressed sports management in Turkey from different perspectives.



According to their findings, they emphasized several points: an insufficiency of education; the importance of merit; the existence of uneducated managers with different goals; the appointment of those who do not come from the top of their profession; the existence of day-saving policies; the inadequacy of those who manage sports federations; political pressure in sports; a lack of sports culture; the existence of ill-equipped managers in sports management; the existence of managers with accelerated views; and insufficient representation in the international arena. These results coincide with the results obtained in this study. Gülşen and Dalkıran (2017), in a study comparing the perception levels of sports experts and sport management senior students on the current problems in Turkish sports management, students emphasized that the institutions that manage sports do not give enough priority to those who receive education in sport management and that those in sport management are insufficient to recognize the problems. This result coincides with the results of this study on meritlessness and a lack of a sustainable sports policy. In a study by Başkan et al. (2020), in which the views of the students studying at the Faculty of Sports Sciences on the concept of sports management were examined, the students emphasized the necessity and importance of fair, non-partisan, meritorious managers who protect their athletes and who have the qualifications required by their profession. Eren et al. (2016), in a study in which they investigated the educational status and competencies of managers working in sports clubs, found that as the educational level of sports managers increases, they are more successful in fields of planning, decision-making, communication, and technology and that the fact that they have been involved in sports before contributes positively to their management methods. In a study conducted by Kurtipek et al. (2020) with students in the sports management department, it was pointed out that although interest in sports and the need for sports managers is increasing, the difficulty in being appointed to state staff was emphasized. These findings coincide with the result of the need for meritorious managers in this study and the expectation of having experienced and knowledgeable managers in sports management.

Zorba et al. (2021) examined the sports awareness of adolescents who actively or passively participated in sports as a type of recreational activity in various variables. It was seen that boys' awareness of sports was higher than girls at the point of 'distinguishing sports knowledge and information'; those who actively participated in sports had higher sports awareness in the social and individual benefit dimension than those who participated passively (as spectators), and those who engaged in sports in their families had higher sports awareness in the social and individual benefit dimension than those who did not engage in sports in their families. In his study, Turan (2021) examined the attitudes toward sports

activities and found that the orientation towards sports activities differed according to gender and that the orientation of male participants was higher than that of females. In his study with working women, Yüksel (2014) found that women's roles at home may be an obstacle at the point of orientation to sports activities, that there may be different elements that vary from society to society or from culture to culture in the orientation of women and men to sports, that gender may have an impact on the orientation of both sexes to sports, and that this situation may hurt women's sports awareness. In a study conducted by Yetiş et al. (2022) to investigate the relationship between certain demographic variables and sport awareness levels of students from different departments studying in the faculty of sports sciences, it was found that the sport awareness levels of males were higher than those of females. Although several factors and roles are seen to be effective in sports participation and sports awareness in the literature, in general, the fact that men's sports awareness and sports participation are higher than women's is in line with the results of this study.

Downward et al. (2014) found that a higher level of education can be directly linked to a greater awareness of the benefits and importance of sports and exposure to sports where sport consumption skills are developed. This finding shows that the higher education level of employees working in the units managing sports and coming from within the sports will have a positive impact on the development of sports awareness in society in terms of the importance and benefits of sports, and this is in line with the result of the sports awareness of the employees obtained in our study.

Yücel (2015), in his study to determine the views of provincial directors working in Provincial Directorates of Youth Services and Sports in Turkey on the formation of modern sports awareness, found that modern sports awareness has not been formed in Turkey. In line with this finding, it was emphasized that there is a need for institutionalization, sufficient club activities, more effective local administration, a functional sports policy, and modern sports legislation. In a study conducted by Şahin and İmamoğlu (2011) with academicians and MPs, their interpretation of the views on the role of politics was that politics has a role but should not have a role, government policies should primarily support physical infrastructure investments, and that 'the biggest obstacle in creating a sports policy or program' is a lack of sports awareness. These findings coincide with the results of the present study, which indicate that there is insufficient awareness of sports orientation, a need for a sustainable sports policy, and insufficient infrastructure.

Hallmann et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of adequate sports infrastructure for sports participation, as many sports cannot be practiced without appropriate sports facilities,

and that adequate sports infrastructure is needed to succeed in the government's policy goal of encouraging participation in sports. This finding coincides with the results of this study on a lack of infrastructure. Biddle (2012) argues that promoting infrastructure and access to activity further emphasizes interventions' social and environmental aspects. He emphasizes that infrastructure and access are essential at all stages of behavior, from pre-contemplation to maintenance, as they are more like a framework for becoming and staying active. This finding is in line with the conclusion of this study as to what a sustainable sports policy should be.

Özer and Çolakoğlu (2017), in their study aiming to determine the opinions of sports managers who are responsible for the management and administration of sports on the formation of contemporary sports awareness, found the following: that the financial resources allocated to sports are insufficient; the activities carried out by public institutions and the private sector to spread sports to the society are insufficient; the number of sports facilities is also insufficient; contemporary sports awareness is not formed in society; sports culture and sports education are not given sufficiently in educational institutions; physical education and sports department graduates are not adequately equipped in terms of sports culture and sports education; the effectiveness of school sports is insufficient; mass media should be used more effectively in order to create sports awareness in society; the current sports legislation cannot meet the needs for the modernization and popularization of sports; the efforts of youth and sports clubs for the popularization of sports are insufficient; and that a lack of qualified sports managers and sportsmen is one of the main problems of sports. These findings coincide with the results of this study on a lack of infrastructure, an inadequacy of sports awareness, a lack of sustainable sports policy, and a discontinuity of studies.

Dimeo (2014) emphasizes the importance of a sports policy by stating that a sports policy is both a practice and an academic subject area; at the point of practice, it encompasses decision-making, debate, and day-to-day forms of sport development, while what falls under the academic framework of sport policy relates to governments, often with a public dimension, aiming to achieve non-sporting results and possibly facing the challenges of politics, organizational fallibility and a failure to involve all stakeholders. This conclusion aligns with a lack of sustainable sports policy in this study.

Bergsgard and Norberg (2010) express a lack of sustainable sports policy by emphasizing that despite the expanding pluralism in the field of sport and changes in the political system, there is still no significant change in the patterns of sports policy in the Nordic countries, no significant signs of strengthening the role of parliament vis-à-vis the executive or increased lobbying from sports organizations to parliament.

Costa (2005), in a study conducted with seventeen sport management experts from around the world, stated that the continuing debate on sports management research, practice, theory, and education indicates that the field is growing. Sports management experts also emphasized the need for modern sports policies to ensure adequate and constructive development. Özen et al. (2012) evaluated the views of academicians working in physical education and sports on the current problems in Turkish sports management. They found that the participation of public schools and local administrations in sports in terms of facilities and materials is relatively low, there are insufficient opportunities for sports popularization studies, there is not enough coordination in sports, and employment in sports is not enough. These findings overlap with the results showing a lack of sustainable sports policy and infrastructure in this study.

Güngörmüş and Yılmaz (2007) examined the views of MPs on the problems of Turkish sports and found that the MPs emphasized an insufficiency of facilities that provide sports opportunities for everyone and the need to expand them, the effective use of communication channels such as print and visual media for the promotion and popularization of sports, and the insufficiency of the budget allocated to sports in the general budget. Solmaz et al. (2016), in a study examining the views of MPs on Turkish sports management and the current situation of sports, showed that MPs emphasized that the human resources managing sports within the organization of the Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sports should be people trained in sports management. Ilgar and Cihan (2019) examined the opinions of faculty members of Faculties of Sports Sciences and schools of physical education and sports on the current problems of Turkish sports. In their study, faculty members stated a lack of communication between institutions, a lack of planning in the construction of sports facilities, inadequacies in the maintenance and repair of existing facilities, and a lack of qualitative competence of club managers as important problems. These findings coincide with those under the titles of merit, lack of infrastructure, and sports awareness in this study. Schmidt-Millard (2003) emphasizes the importance of education in sports by stating that it is up to young teachers to develop an awareness of how all scientific fields in sports are intertwined to know what to do in their profession. This result aligns with the research findings, as it shows that people in sport management should be well-educated.

### *Limitations*

This study is limited to the Ministry of Youth and Sports employees. Due to the convenience sampling method's disadvantages, the results should not be generalized to all

Ministry of Youth and Sports employees. However, it should not be ignored that the results obtained are compatible with most of the studies in the literature. In the future, similar studies can be conducted with a different target audience to be selected with a different sampling method. For example, Sports awareness and fundamental problems of sports can be examined to cover all sports branches. Qualitative and quantitative research can be conducted on sports awareness and problems with sports club managers, employees, and athletes operating in all branches.

## CONCLUSION

Based on all these analyses, determinations, and results, it is meant that those who work in the institutions legally and constitutionally responsible for the development and management of sports emphasize the knowledge and experience of those working in sports management and emphasize a preference for meritorious people, showing that the perspective in sports policies and manager preferences should be updated. Attempts to be made with a reformist perspective will contribute positively to ensuring the continuity in sports development. Studies to be carried out with this perspective would be a driving force in eliminating a lack of infrastructure, a lack of merit, a lack of sustainable sports policy, a lack of continuity in sports studies, and a lack of sports awareness in society, which are considered as important problems for sports in underdeveloped and developing countries.

In this regard, we can say the following:

- First and foremost, public institutions providing sports management services should further increase their awareness of sports through in-service training programs, and the reflections of this awareness on the target audience should be observed.
- The existing sports legislation should be revised to anticipate today's and tomorrow's needs, and its effects should be evaluated.
- It should not be ignored that employment in institutions and organizations that have a say in sports management should be based on merit and fairness, which will positively impact sports development in the short and long term.
- Failure to build the necessary infrastructure due to insufficient resources will cause sports and society to be insufficiently brought together and, consequently, the awareness of sports in society to be damaged. Infrastructural inadequacies should be eliminated by needs without wasting public resources.

- Higher education institutions providing sports education should carry out effective studies on sports awareness and sports education.
- Sports awareness programs should be established to raise awareness about sports more effectively in educational institutions of the Ministry of National Education at all levels.

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### **Authors' contributions**

All authors contributed equally to the study's concept, design, and discussion of the results and the manuscript's preparation. All authors were involved in the data collection process. All authors took responsibility for data analysis and interpretation of the data.

### **Conflict of interest declaration**

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