



Evaluation of Athletic Identity in Elite Fencers

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Abstract

The objective of the research was to analyze and comment on the sportive identities of the star, young and great athletes actively participated in competitions in our country, became involved among the first 16 athletes in formal classifications (in their own categories) of Turkey Fencing Federation between 2016-2017, and attended in the Big National Team Camp held in the county Antalya/Alanya between the dates of 18-29/8/2016 and the Star-Young Europe Championship Preparation Camp held in the province Ankara between the dates of 18-26/2/2017. The research group consisted of 64 athletes invited to the relevant national team camps in the 2016-2017 season. Based on the survey model, within the relevant study, Athletic Identity Scale which was developed by Brewer and Cornelius (1), and also validated and made reliable in Turkish by Çetinkaya (5), was used. In evaluation of data and estimation of values, the SPSS 16.0 statistical package program was utilized. Data was summarized with averages and standard deviations. Since data showed a normal distribution, independence group t-test for pair comparisons, One Way Variance Analysis (anova) for multiple comparisons were preferred. In this study, scale reliability coefficient was calculated as .74. The significance level was regarded as 0.05 in this study. As a result of the research; it was concluded that there were no significant differences in the average points from the Athletic Identity Scale in accordance with the gender variable; there was a significant difference in favour of the participants, aged 15-18, graduating from high school and below in accordance with the age and education background variable among 64 athletes invited to the relevant national team camps in the 2016-2017 season.

Key Words: Fencing, Athletic Identity, National Athlete

Elit Eskrimcilerde Sporcu Kimliğinin Değerlendirilmesi

Özet

Bu araştırmanın amacı, ülkemizde faal olarak yarışmalara katılan ve Türkiye Eskrim Federasyonunun 2016-2017 sezonu resmi klasman sıralamalarında (kendi kategorilerinde) ilk 16 sporcu arasında yer alan, 18-29/8/2016 tarihleri arasında Antalya/Alanya ilçesinde yapılan Büyükler Milli Takım Kampı ve 18-26/2/2017 tarihleri arasında Ankara ilinde yapılan Yıldız-Genç Avrupa Şampiyonası Hazırlık Kampına katılan yıldız, genç ve büyük sporcuların sporcu kimliklerini incelemek ve yorumlamaktır. Araştırma grubunu; 2016-2017 sezonunda bahsi geçen milli takım kamplarına davet edilen 64 sporcu oluşturmaktadır. Tarama (survey) modeli esas alınarak yürütülen bu çalışmada; Brewer ve Cornelius (1) tarafından geliştirilen, Türkçe geçerlilik ve güvenilirliği Çetinkaya (5) tarafından yapılan Sporcu Kimliği Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Verilerin değerlendirilmesinde ve hesaplanmış değerlerin bulunmasında SPSS 16.0 istatistik paket programı kullanılmıştır. Veriler yüzde, ortalama ve standart sapmalar verilerek özetlenmiştir. Veriler normal dağılım gösterdiğinden dolayı ikili küme karşılaştırmaları için bağımsız grup t testi, ikiden fazla küme karşılaştırmaları için Tek Yönlü Varyans Analizi (ANOVA) kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışma kapsamında ölçek güvenilirlik katsayısı .74 olarak hesaplanmıştır. Araştırmada anlamlılık düzeyi 0.05 olarak alınmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda; 2016-2017 sezonunda bahsi geçen milli takım kamplarına davet edilen 64 sporcunun, Sporcu Kimliği Ölçeği ortalama puanlarının cinsiyet değişkenine göre anlamlı düzeyde farklılaşmadığı; Yaş ve Eğitim değişkenine göre ise 15-18 yaş arası ile Lise ve Altı eğitim düzeyine sahip katılımcılar lehine anlamlı düzeyde bir farklılık olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eskrim, Sporcu Kimliği, Milli Sporcu

INTRODUCTION

Today, "identity" concept has become a fundamental concept that concerns many sciences such as sociology, social psychology, philosophy, literature, political sciences, and anthropology. The fact that many disciplines make an effort to approach the same concept with their own perspectives also contribute to the rapid development of the relevant literature (6). Identity concept that helps to understand individuals in social life, has become a concept that arouse interest. Especially researchers working on psychology argue many views on the effects of identity on social environment and social life. (12).

The place of sports in human health is getting more and more important from past to present. Sports are thought to be a supporter of the moral character development of the individual or individuals, while making an important contribution to the psychological development of the individual, as well as the physical development (9). Although it is not possible to deal with sports apart from psychology due to its nature, it is seen that the concept of identity is often used with the expression "athlete identity" in sports sciences. According to Brewer et al. (2), athlete identity is a part of self-identity, and status of alignment with sports and being powerful and privileged. The effort to better understand the psychological, emotional, and behavioral aspects of athletes in the field of sports science has led researchers to focus on the self-identity of athletes. Athlete identity, in this regard, is the level of an individual's self-identification with athlete roles in relation to the concept of self (13). Athlete identity is considered as a part of multifaceted personal identity. In other words, it is a dimension of the extent to which a person perceives and characterizes himself/herself as an athlete and a multifaceted self-perception (4).

Studies show that strong athlete identity is positively associated with strong self-identity, more social interaction, higher confidence level, and more positive sports experience. On the other hand, it has been emphasized that athletes who put sports at the center of their lives excessively will experience various physical and psychological problems such as doing excessive sports, malnutrition, injury and continuing to do sports despite the injury. (15). In recent years, there are many areas in the literature that are associated with the identity of the athlete, which has started to play a very important role in

supporting social life rather than success related to sports. For example, in the article of Graupensperger et al. (10) titled (2020) Social (Un)distancing: Teammate Interactions, Athletic Identity, and Mental Health of Student-Athletes During the COVID-19 Pandemic, With the corona virus affecting the whole world, it has been stated that the mental health and other social negative effects of the athletes who move away from their working tempo are more easily eliminated with their high athlete identity perceptions. The aim of this study is to examine the effects of athlete identity on different variables in elite level fencing athletes in our country.

METHOD

In this study carried out on the basis of the survey model; The Athlete Identity Scale, developed by Brewer and Cornelius (1) and for which validity and reliability in Turkish established by Çetinkaya (5), was used. The relevant scale consists of 10 items and is 5-point Likert type. Moreover, while the data were collected with the Athlete Identity Scale, some personal information of the referees who participated in the study were also collected. These are age, gender, education, duration of sportive experience, national sportsmanship category, and the sportive experiences and educational status of the family members of the participants.

The research population consists of 64 athletes, 34 (53.1%) women and 30 (46.9%) men from young and adult categories, who actively participating in the competitions and being among the first 16 athletes in the official classification rankings (in their own categories) of the Turkish Fencing Federation for the 2016-2017 season, and who participated in the Seniors National Team Camp held in Antalya/Alanya district between 18-29/8/2016 and the Junior-Youth European Championship Preparation Camp held in Ankara between 18-26/2/2017

The scale forms were distributed to the participants who volunteered to answer the form, after making the necessary explanations by the researcher, and approval was obtained from the Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee of Selçuk University Faculty of Sports Sciences. SPSS 16.0 statistical package program was used to evaluate the data and find the calculated values. Data are summarized with percentages, mean and standard deviation values. Whether the data showed normal distribution or not was checked

with Kurtosis - Skewness Coefficient range, and it was determined that the data were normally distributed, since the range did not exceed the values of +2.0 and -2.0 (8). Since the data showed normal distribution, independent group t-test was

used for pairwise cluster comparisons, and One-Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) was used for comparisons of more than two clusters. In the research, the level of significance was taken as 0.05.

RESULTS

Table 1. The distribution of the identical information that belongs to the fencers attended the research

Variables		f	%
Gender	Male	34	53,1
	Female	30	46,9
	Total	64	100,0
Age	15-18 Years	40	62,5
	19 Years and Over	24	37,5
	Total	64	100,0
Education Status	High school and below	37	57,8
	University and over	27	42,2
	Total	64	100,0
License Duration	1-5 Years	15	23,4
	6-10 Years	34	53,1
	11 Years and Over	15	23,4
	Total	64	100,0

When Table 1 is examined, 53.1% (n=34) of the athletes participating in the research are female and 46.9% (n=30) are male athletes. As a result of the examination of the participants by age groups, it was determined that 62.5% (n=40) of the participants were between the ages of 15-18 and 37.5% (n=24) were athletes aged 19 and older. As a result of the examination of the athletes according to the variable of educational status, it was observed that the majority of them were athletes with a high school or lower education level with a rate of 57.8% (n=37), and according to the variable of athlete license duration, the athletes with 6-10 years of experience constitute the majority with a rate of 53.1% (n=34).

Table 2. T-Test Results of Point Averages of Athletic Identity Scale in Accordance with the Gender Variable of the Fencers Participated in the Research

	Gender	N	X	Ss	Sd	t	P
Athletic Identity Scale	Male	30	3,88	0,68	62	0,39	0,969
(Total)	Female	34	3,87	0,79			

When Table 2 is examined, as a result of examining the athletes participating in the research according to the gender variable, no statistically significant difference was observed in the Average Scores of the Athlete Identity Scale.

Table 3. T-Test Results of Point Averages of Athletic Identity Scale in Accordance with the Age Variable of the Fencers Participated in the Research

	Age	N	X	Ss	Sd	t	P
Athletic Identity Scale	15-18 Years	40	4,04	0,67	62	2,389	0,026*
(Total)	19 Years and Over	24	3,60	0,77			

*P<0.05

When Table 3. is examined, the results of the analysis of the athletes participating in the research according to the age variable, [t(62)=2.389; P<0.05] A statistically significant difference was observed in the Mean Scores of the Athlete Identity Scale in favor of the participants aged 15-18.

Table 4. T-Test Results of Point Averages of Athletic Identity Scale in Accordance with the Age Variable of the Fencers Participated in the Research

	Education	N	X	Ss	Sd	t	P
Athletic Identity Scale	15-18 Years	37	4,05	0,67	62	2,203	0,036*
(Total)	19 Years and Over	27	3,65	0,77			

*P<0.05

When Table 4 is examined, the results of the examination of the athletes participating in the research according to the education level variable, [$t(62)=2.203$; $P<0.05$] A statistically significant difference was observed in the Athlete Identity Scale Mean Scores in favor of the participants with high school and below education level.

Table 5. Anova Test Results of Point Averages of Athletic Identity Scale in Accordance with the Age Variable of the Fencers Participated in the Research

	License Duration		N	X	Ss	Sd	F	P
Athletic Identity Scale	A	1-5 Years	15	4,006	0,846	2	2,202	0,119
(Total)	B	6-10 Years	34	3,979	0,683	61		
	C	11 Years and Over	15	3,540	0,684	63		

When Table 5 is examined, as a result of examining the athletes participating in the research according to the variable of athlete license duration; It has been determined that there is no significant difference between the participants with a license period of 1-5 years, 6-10 years and 11 years or more.

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

While it was observed that the perceptions of the athlete identity of the fencers who participated in the research, which were examined with different variables, did not differ statistically according to the gender and duration of experience variable, however statistically significant differences were determined according to the age and education variable. It has been determined that the average score of the participants with high school and below education level is higher than the athletes with an associate degree and above education level. This may be due to the fact that all of the athletes do not plan a sports-oriented life in their future plans. It is thought that the perception of athlete identity may be low, especially among the athletes who receive training for different occupational groups. According to the age variable, the average score of the athletes aged 15-18 is higher than those aged 19 and older; It may be due to the different branch-oriented success desire or goals of the athletes. The thought that younger athletes will have a relatively long-term sports career compared to the other group may affect their perception of athlete identity.

We see that the perception of athlete identity has been examined in quite different groups and athletes interested in different sports branches in recent years in the literature. In the study conducted by Yanar et al. (16) on tennis and badminton

players, it was determined that the mean scores of the athletes did not differ statistically according to the gender variable. In the study conducted by Can and Kaçay (4) on 156 different athletes, no difference was found regarding the variables of gender, age and sports year (experience). In the study of Doğaner et al. (7) conducted on table tennis, tennis and badminton players, it was determined that the perceptions of athlete identity did not differ statistically on the basis of age and gender. In the study conducted Baba Kaya et al. (2018), it was determined that the athlete identity perceptions of the participating athletes did not differ from each other according to the age variable but differed significantly in favor of male participants according to gender variable. There are parts of our research that show similarities with the studies conducted, and different results from other studies were found, especially for the age variable. This can be explained by the fact that the age range of the fencers participating in the research is relatively higher than in other studies. Especially in studies involving university students or professional athletes, the age variable is above a certain age, and the age range is wider in our research.

Athlete identity is a subject that has been examined not only in national studies but also in international dimension. In the study conducted by Cabrita et al. (3) on 442 athletes in Spain, in which

the variables of athlete identity and exercise addiction were examined, significant differences were found in gender and age variables. In addition, apart from only age, gender and similar demographic variables, in the qualitative study of Poucher and Tamminen (14) on 13 Canadian elite athletes, it was emphasized that the effects of athlete identity were observed at a high level in professional athletes, and it has been determined that while interpreting the success of the athletes, they refer to issues such as individual work, desire and so on, but they make statements based on external factors when talking about their failures. In addition, factors such as family, coaches, friends or social environment may be effective in sporting success, but the effect of individual athlete identity, which has a strong influence, was also emphasized in a study conducted on Japanese college students (11).

Athlete identity is seen as an important factor affecting sportive success, apart from physical training adequacy. There are opinions in this way in many studies. In addition to the physical development of the athlete, psychological readiness can increase athlete's success. However, taking into account the data of our study, measures and investments to be taken in order to increase the perception of the identity of the athlete, especially among the athletes aged 19 and older and those with an associate degree and undergraduate level of education, will contribute to the development of the fencing branch.

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