



## SPORMETRE

The Journal of Physical Education and Sport Sciences  
Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi



DOI: 10.33689/spormetre.1390018

Geliş Tarihi (Received): 13.11.2023

Kabul Tarihi (Accepted): 12.03.2024

Online Yayın Tarihi (Published): 25.03.2024

### ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF FOOTBALLERS: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH\*

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**Abstract:** The aim of this research is to investigate the factors determining the organizational commitment of footballers towards the clubs they belong to. "Phenomenology design", one of the qualitative research methods, was used, in the research. Research population consists of 15 footballers selected out of the players in football clubs which compete in all league levels in Trabzon city of Turkey. Data collected from the footballers via semi-structured interview form have been examined via content analysis. Findings of the research implicate that for both the amateur and professional footballers, determinant factors on organizational commitment are age, family structure, training status (amateur/professional), league position of their club, incomes received from and outside of the club (material benefits), order of payments, experience and technical-tactical expertise of coaches, club directors, marital status, offered benefits by the club facilities, supporter phenomenon, extra-club social activities, moral value of their club on footballers, feelings of loyalty and affection of footballers towards their club, seeing their club as a step for transfer, feelings of cooperation, unity and interaction bond among footballer-coach-director, contract term and the city where the club is located in.

**Key Words:** Football, footballer, football club, organizational commitment, club loyalty

### FUTBOLCULARIN ÖRGÜTSEL BAĞLILIKLARI: NİTEL BİR YAKLAŞIM

**Öz:** Bu araştırma ile futbolcuların görev yaptıkları kulüplere olan örgütsel bağlılıkları üzerinde etkiye sahip faktörlerin araştırılması amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan "fenomenoloji deseni" kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu, Türkiye'nin Trabzon şehri içerisinde tüm lig düzeylerinde mücadele eden kulüplerde futbol oynayan sporcular arasından belirlenmiş 15 futbolcudan oluşmaktadır. Yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat formu kullanılarak futbolcularla yapılan görüşmeler sonucu elde edilen veriler içerik analizi yoluyla çözümlenmiştir. Araştırmadan elde edilen sonuçlara göre gerek amatör gerekse profesyonel futbolcuların yaşlarının, aile faktörlerinin, spor yapma düzeylerinin (amatör/profesyonel), kulübün lig seviyesinin, kulüpten ve kulüp dışından elde edilen gelir seviyelerinin (maddiyat), yapılan ödemelerin düzeninin, antrenörlerin deneyim ve teknik-taktik bilgisinin, kulüp yöneticisi faktörünün, medeni durumlarının, kulüplerin sahip olduğu tesis imkânlarının, taraftar olgusunun, kulüp dışı sosyal etkinliklerin, kulüplerin futbolcular üzerindeki manevi değerinin, futbolcuların kulübe karşı hissettikleri aidiyet ve içtenlik duygularının, kulübü transfer basamağı olarak görme düşüncesinin, futbolcu-antrenör-yönetici birlik beraberlik ve etkileşim duygusunun, sözleşme sürelerinin ve kulübün yer aldığı ilin örgütsel bağlılıkları üzerinde etkili olduğu belirlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Futbol, futbolcu, futbol kulübü, örgütsel bağlılık, kulübe bağlılık

\* This study is prepared by summarizing a part of the doctoral thesis entitled "Investigation of Factors Affecting Football Players' Commitment to the Club at Different Education Levels (Acceptance Date: 01.02.2021-Trabzon University Graduate School of Education)", conducted by Ubeyde KILIÇASLAN under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Akın ÇELİK.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Football; It is a sports organization that is enjoyed by everyone, including children, young people and adults, and has millions of viewers all over the world and attracts great attention (Kim and Marrison, 2005). Embodying in itself the concepts of amateurship and professionalism, amateurship in football refers to activities conducted for the sake of fun alone without expecting any material returns and those engaged in football not as a profession but as hobby are classified as amateur athletes (Öziş, 2015). Professional, as the opposite of amateur, is the collective name of the individuals performing this sport as a profession to earn their livelihood. These money-driven athletes are named as professional sportspeople (Erol, 1997). Since football is a branch that cannot be played solo, it is actualized by official and nonofficial establishments forged with the cooperation of more than one person. In that way, a favorable setting could then be created for the birth of organized sports clubs (Özdemir, 2019). In time as economics of football boosted, a greater attention has been drawn on relevant factors involved in football (footballer, coach, director etc.). One of the pillars of football which integrates all these features is undoubtedly footballers themselves. Although popularity of footballers and their affiliated club is in parallel with both their individual and team performance, scientific works have already put forth that factors related to the field of organizational psychology are also effective on performance-driven success in football. On top of these factors is, without a doubt, organizational commitment of footballers playing in both professional and amateur football clubs (Kristiansen et al., 2012).

Regarding this issue, Başer (1994) stated that the emotional element of a football team will be formed according to the communication processes between the players, coaches and managers who make up the team. In other words, the relationships between the players within the team and with their coaches and managers are extremely important in terms of organizational commitment. If the interaction between the groups determined within the team is at a good level, if an atmosphere of mutual love and respect has been created within the team, if the friendship relations are sincere and sincere, if the dialogue behavior and actions of the coaches and club managers with the athletes are carried out within the framework of mutual respect, if the current team is not expected to perform beyond its capacity and the football players Regardless of the outcome, if they know that they have to support each other during the competition for the sake of their team and in order to win, it is inevitable that this situation will have a positive impact on the team performance (Başer, 1994).

Organizational commitment concept is formed with the combination of the term *organization* which means management process in which individuals' efforts are coordinated with target objectives (Güçlü, 2003) and strong bonds felt by those in an organization, and *commitment* in reference to loyalty towards humans, opinions, organizations and senior employees (Guetzkov, 1955). Organizational commitment is the psychological attitude of employees towards their organization. Besides, it is a psychological phenomenon which explains the degree of bond between employees and organizations and this concept further drives their motive to continue organizational loyalty (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Even though modern technology enabled us to attain higher life standards, inner workings of an organization can be viable through the interaction and coordination among the members of an organization (Permarupan, 2013). Thus, staff commitment to their organization gains value in order to bring corporate objectives into surface. Workers united with their company would accomplish their assigned duties not on demand but wilfully. Within that context, organizational commitment of individuals constitutes the heaviest building block of their in-company career and future of their organization (Pierro et al., 2013).

To ensure that clubs are managed better and attain greater success, reciprocal interaction across the management, coach, footballers and club employees should be maintained in an optimal level to attain maximum productivity from players. This notion thus mandates organizational commitment (Ulukan, 2006). Footballers' loyalty to their club is directly proportional with club's success. On the other hand success of a club greatly affects other relevant factors in the club. It is attested that a devoted player would perform his best for the sake of his club, which then would positively designate the success of a club and footballer as well as the quality of procured service (İlsev, 1997; Nelson and Quick, 1997). Sense of trust and commitment of footballers towards their club originates from a myriad of factors. According to data retrieved from existing literature, effective variables on individuals' organizational commitments are as displayed in the research by Nortcraft and Neale (1999) (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Factors which determine organizational commitment (Northcraft and Neale, 1999, p. 471)

<b>Personal factors</b>	<b>Intra-organizational Factors</b>	<b>Extra-organizational Factors</b>
1. Job expectations	1. Quality and value of the work	1. New job prospects
2. Psychological contract	2. Management	2. Professionalism
3. Personal features	3. Wage level	3. Ratio of unemployment
	4. Supervision	4. Socio-economic status of the country
	5. Organizational culture	5. State of the sector
	6. Organizational justice	
	7. Organizational awards	
	8. Teamwork	
	9. State of the parent sector of the organization	

### **Research Objective**

The aim of this research is to investigate the factors determining organizational commitment of footballers towards the clubs they work for. In addition to personal features of footballers, factors within and outside of the club are also known to be influential in changing the course of relationship between footballers and their club. This study focuses on what kind of an effect this change has on footballers, which factors determine their club loyalty and the views of footballers, which can vary according to different factors. This research is of great value as it sheds light to relevant studies and raises awareness on footballers' club loyalty. This study is unique in the field as no other research has yet been conducted to this date in relation to organizational commitment of footballers in Trabzon city. Findings suggested here will be of benefit for directors, coaches and footballers working in amateur and professional football clubs and also for club directors, coaches, athletes and club staff employed in other sports branches. In line with the motives listed above, this study sought answers for the below-given research problems:

- What are the views of amateur footballers on the factors determining their club loyalty?
- What are the views of professional footballers on the factors determining their club loyalty?

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Model**

In this study, which examined the factors affecting football players' commitment to the club, the "phenomenology research design" was used, which allows people to express their understanding, feelings, perspectives and perceptions about a certain phenomenon or concept

and to describe how they experience this phenomenon (Rose, Beeby and Parker, 1995). The phenomenology pattern is a pattern that reveals the common understanding of the lived experiences of several people regarding a phenomenon or a certain concept. The aim of this pattern is to understand the essence of the experiences of people who experience the phenomenon in depth (Creswell, 2018).

**Population**

Research population consists of 15 footballers selected out of athletes playing in football clubs that compete in all league levels in Trabzon city of Turkey. These footballers were selected to exemplify the diversity. Diversity in the group could then be achieved by considering age, marital status, education level, total length spent in sports, degree in sports, league status and income received from the club and outside of the club. Demographic information of footballers is as shown below;

**Table 2.** Demographic information of footballers

Footballers	Age	Marital status	Education Level	Total length in sports	Level in sports	League status	Income received from the club	Income received outside of the club
F1	26	Single	University	13	Amateur	2. Amateur	Yes	None
F2	30	Married	University	18	Amateur	1. Amateur	Yes	Yes
F3	31	Single	University	21	Amateur	1. Amateur	Yes	None
F4	37	Married	University	23	Amateur	BAL League	Yes	None
F5	18	Single	High-school	7	Amateur	BAL League	Yes	None
F6	32	Single	Postgraduate	20	Professional	3. League	Yes	None
F7	24	Single	High-school	10	Professional	3. League	Yes	Yes
F8	19	Single	High-school	7	Professional	3. League	Yes	None
F9	20	Single	High-school	8	Professional	3. League	Yes	None
F10	21	Single	High-school	9	Professional	3. League	Yes	None
F11	21	Single	High-school	10	Professional	2. League	Yes	None
F12	21	Single	High-school	12	Professional	2. League	Yes	None
F13	23	Single	High-school	7	Professional	2. League	Yes	None
F14	24	Single	High-school	13	Professional	2. League	Yes	None
F15	22	Single	University	15	Professional	Super League	Yes	No

As seen in Table 2, age range of interviewed footballers is between 18 to 37. 2 footballers are married and 13 are single. 9 footballers are high-school graduates, 5 footballers are university graduates and 1 footballer holds postgraduate degree (Master's). Footballers' sports background ranges from 7 to 23 years. 5 footballers play in amateur league and 10 in professional league. While all of the participant footballers receive income from their club, F2 and F7 receive income outside of the football club (Table 2).

**Data Collection Tools**

In order to collect data from footballers included in the research, interview technique has been employed. In qualitative researches, in social sciences at most, interview is one of the most popular data collection tools (Chadwick et al., 1984; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Interview

technique is harnessed to see how individuals comprehend unobservable actions, emotions and the way humans describe surrounding world (Merriam, 2013). In this study, as it offers flexibility to the researcher, semi-structured interview technique has been administered to ensure that prepared questions can be changed or explained in detail during the course of interview (Ekiz, 2009).

In the formation of interview questions, researches in relevant literature were examined to create a question pool. Content validity of questions was assessed by a total of 5 specialists; clarity and intelligibility of questions was assessed by 1 specialist in the field Turkish Education, 1 specialist in the field of measurement and evaluation, 3 specialists in the field of physical education. Revised interview form according to the views and recommendations of specialists was then tried on 3 footballers prior to actual interview. Conducted pilot study provided preliminary information to see if, before the interview, questions were well comprehended by footballers. Before the interview, participants were informed that their names would be kept discreet and provided information would solely be used for the objectives of this research. Data collection tool consists of two parts. In the first part personal information of the participants were asked to determine their age, marital status, education level, total length in sports, level in sports, league level and receiving income from the club and outside of the club. Second part consists of questions asked to footballers during the interviews.

In order to determine the underlying reasons for the players' commitment to the club;

- *What does commitment to the club mean to them, what are the positive and negative factors that may affect an athlete's commitment to their club,*
- *What are the factors that tie them to the club, what they can say when they evaluate their commitment to the club in terms of managers, coaches, teammates and team employees,*
- *What they think about the club they are part of.*
- *A semi-structured interview form was prepared in which the reasons for whether they recommend it to different athletes or not, and what should be done to increase the athletes' commitment to the club were questioned.*

A voice recorder was used in the interviews and lasted an average of 15 minutes for each participant. The data obtained using the voice recorder was then transferred to digital media.

### **Data Analysis**

Data obtained from research interviews were examined via content analysis. Content analysis technique is formed by dividing some of in-text word groups into smaller categories. Content analysis is a renewable and systematic technique (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012). In this analysis method, key motive is to obtain concepts which can explain collected data with fewer words. In the research *data reduction* was conducted after describing the concepts related to the topic and determining of analysis units (footballers, clubs). In an attempt to examine and evaluate the data more closely, category and themes were specified (Ekiz, 2009). Themes were formed on the basis of Northcraft and Neale's (1990) research.

### **Validity and Reliability**

In accordance with ethical rules, this research aims to be qualified to attain valid and reliable data and results (Merriam, 2009). In qualitative researches validity is related to a researcher's observation of a case as neutral and as impartial as possible (Kirk and Miller, 1986). As opposed to the reality in quantitative researches, researcher him/herself is the measurement tool in terms of reliability (Patton, 2002). In qualitative researches concepts of validity and reliability are mostly replaced by concepts of credibility and consistency (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Consistency of a research mandates that same results are attained by administering the same method when the same research is conducted by other researchers in the same setting (Merriam, 2009). In this particular research too in order to secure consistency, after transcribing the data collected from interviews, texts were submitted to the approval of participants so as to prevent any potential misunderstandings. In the analysis of interview data, codings were also prepared by the researcher, obtained codes were checked for consistency and codes that were found to be inconsistent were again opened to discussion.

Qualitative researches are exempt from the goal of generalizability of research results (Merriam, 2009; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). In qualitative researches in order to ensure validity it is vital to secure reliability (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Besides, in the process of reporting data, sharing direct quotations and seeking guidance from field experts in every stage of the research are among the criteria enhancing the credibility of a research (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Likewise, in the submission of findings, views of participants were referenced as direct quotations so that reliability of the research would increase in this research. Findings and results gathered in the research were then submitted to field specialists to attain professional review. During the current research, it was acted within the framework of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive". The ethics committee approval of Trabzon University Faculty of Sport Science was obtained (Date: 08/01/2020, decision no: 81614018-000-E.9).

## **FINDINGS**

According to the views of 15 footballers on the factors determining their club loyalty, relevant categories and themes were designated (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Footballers' views on the factors determining their club loyalty

THEME	CODE	F	FOOTBALLER	
			Amateur	Professional
PERSONAL FACTORS	Family factor	7	F1, F3, F5	F7, F8, F10, F14
	Football passion	2	F1, F5	-
	Ownership /sense of belonging- Feeling of sincerity(kindness)	5	F4, F5	F6, F7, F9
INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS	Financial means of the Club -Timely and regular payment	15	F1, F2, F3, F4, F5	F6, F7, F8, F9, F10, F11, F12, F13, F14, F15
	Coach-Footballer interaction	13	F1, F2, F3, F4, F5	F6, F7, F10, F11, F12, F13, F14, F15
	Footballer-Footballer interaction - Feeling of cooperation	12	F1, F2, F3, F4	F6, F8, F9, F11, F12, F13, F14, F15
	Director-Footballer interaction	10	F1, F2, F3, F4, F5	F8, F11, F12, F14, F15
	Coach experience-Expertise- Technique knowledge	3	F2, F5	F14
	Facilities, services and benefits	6	-	F6, F11, F12, F13, F14, F15
	Contract term	1	-	F15
EXTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS	Seeing as a transfer step-plans to find a new job	9	F4	F7, F9, F10, F11, F12, F13, F14, F15
	Supporters (Fans)	5	-	F7, F11, F12, F13, F15
	Social activities outside of club	3	F1, F4	F6
	Located city of the club	9	F2, F3, F4, F5	F7, F9, F11, F12, F15
	Moral value-popularity of the Club	4	F4, F5	F13, F15

Footballers' views were converged below three main themes namely *personal, intra-organizational and extra-organizational factors* which overall determined their club loyalty.

Among the footballers sharing their views on club loyalty below *personal factors* theme, it was witnessed that 7 footballers emphasized family factor, 5 emphasized ownership/sense of belonging-feeling of sincerity (kindness) and 2 underlined their passion for football (Table 3).

Views of F7 and F8 on “*Family factor*” are as stated below;

*F7: My first priority is keeping my family here with me. I simply can't play football in a city where they can't come. Feeling their presence next to me makes me feel alive and I feel more committed to my work... (PROFESSIONAL)*

*F8: Being away from my family is a totally negative factor for me in every way. I wasn't born and raised in this city. So the truth is I would like to work in the city where my family lives now ... (PROFESSIONAL)*

In this part participants emphasized that family bonds of amateur and professional footballers played vital role in their loyalty towards their club.

Views of F5 and F7 on “*Ownership / sense of belonging-feeling of sincerity (kindness)*” are as shared below;

*F5: You know when you go home, you hug your siblings, have fun, laugh together, it is the same here in my club. Sincere relations here is what makes me more attached to my club... (AMATEUR)*

*F7: I feel like I belong here. And I feel like it belongs to me too. I mean without asking the manager, director or coach I can take initiative to complete my mission. This place is like our baby. We nurture this baby all together. This is the way we think about every coming match... (PROFESSIONAL)*

In this part amateur and professional footballers emphasized that ownership/sense of belonging-feeling of sincerity (kindness) were the emotions determining their club loyalty.

F1's views on “*Football passion*” are as seen below;

*F1: Well I really have no income, I play for fun. For me, my love of football is the greatest bond with my club ... (AMATEUR)*

It can be realized that footballers' passionate love for this game is a critical factor behind their loyalty. It is worth noticing that in this category the views shared mostly belong to amateur footballers.

Theme on *organizational factors* and the views shared below exemplify that in relation to club loyalty, 15 footballers focused on the fact that financial means-timely and regular payment of the club was one motivational factor. Next, 13 footballers underscored coach-footballer interaction, 12 accentuated footballer-footballer interaction-feeling of cooperation, 10 highlighted director/footballer cooperation, 6 underlined club's facilities, means and services, 3 laid stress on coach experience, expertise and technical knowledge and 1 footballer stressed upon the role of contract term in their sense of loyalty (Table 3).

F4, F5 and F11's views on “*Club's financial means-timely and regular payment*” are as stated below;

*F4: In many of the Turkish clubs, there are financial burdens but since our club is Trabzonspor which has already proven its success we have no budget trouble. In our sector it is indeed a must to introduce financial regulations. For example I played in so many different clubs where they offer huge amounts, but the problem is you don't always get what you have been promised for. But there are also clubs offering lower amounts but you always receive your paycheck. Sure, the responsibility lies on the directors. At the start of season they give false promises but once things turn upside down, they fail to keep their promise... (AMATEUR)*

*F5: Well if I say money is behind my loyalty that would be a false statement now because I am only eighteen years of age. I am just a novice taking very first steps. Being a footballer is what the future holds for me. If they misunderstand and assume I am playing just for money at such a young age, no matter what I do in the future, no one would ever help me in my career. (AMATEUR)*

*F11: I wish to be more professional, score great success, bring financial ease to my family, buy a house for my parents and help them live in comfort. I hope my wishes will all come true. That's why financial means of the club hold value for me... (PROFESSIONAL)*

It can be detected that financial means and regular payment offered by a club hold value for footballers. Both the amateur and professional footballers stated that in their future plans and also intra-team motivation, financial opportunities act as a solid motivational factor. However, a number of footballers declared that material wellbeing comes second after the value attributed to the club.

F4 and F11's views on "Coach-footballer interaction" are as referred below;

*F4: A Coach is expected to be likeable by footballers because when footballers love their coach there is rise in their team performance and love for their club. You know what they say 'you must get this match for the sake of your coach'. Once your coach in stills this love into you, this affection automatically turns on... (AMATEUR)*

*F11: In order to fuel a footballer's loyalty to his club I believe the most important factor is interaction between the coach and footballers and a coach who can realize the level of footballers is a successful coach, in my opinion. When you talk like a commander in front of your team novice footballers in particular feel quite uncomfortable and it also negatively changes team performance ... (PROFESSIONAL)*

Obtained findings indicate that coach-footballer interaction plays significant role on amateur and professional footballers, and this interaction is expected to determine professional lives of footballers and the bond between footballers and coach is also reflected on their team performance.

Views of F1 and F12 on the factor "Footballer-footballer interaction-feeling of cooperation" are as stated below;

*F1: In general we regularly meet as teammates and hold joint activities like brunch, cinema etc. Such activities also positively affect team performance. Commitment among teammates is also of great importance... (AMATEUR)*

*F12: I live within the club premises. My whole life is inside this terrain. I maintain good relationships and friendships with my teammates in matches, trainings and*



*also whenever I spend time with them in the premises. These good relationships are a bonding factor for me in this place... (PROFESSIONAL)*

Both for the amateur and professional footballers, feeling of cooperation is reported to be an effective factor in their club loyalty and among footballers extra-club activities also scored team performance positively.

Views of F3 and F14 on “*Director-footballer relationship*” are as exemplified below;

*F3: My loyalty to the club is bound to the way directors treat footballers. Like for example, now, some directors offer not any financial aid to the club but they still come to the field and this is what I find most annoying, they ignore our needs and it drains my motivation. In short, one direct factor is the attitude of directors towards footballers ... (AMATEUR)*

*F14: All of the directors play role in my club loyalty. After all, I am in this profession to earn money and for the record, I do love money. When my wage is paid on time my mind is at ease. I feel much more motivated to outrun my performance... (PROFESSIONAL)*

In this category it was underlined that the level of relationship between directors and footballers determines the commitment level of amateur and professional footballers. It became apparent that relationship between club directors and footballers particularly determined loyalty in affective dimension. It was accentuated that attitudes and behaviours of directors towards footballers and fulfilling the financial promises given by directors also play vital role in the commitment and performance of footballers.

F12’s views on “*Club's facilities, services and benefits*” are as quoted below;

*F12: Facilities really determine my commitment. Physical means of the facilities must be beyond satisfactory. This is not my hometown and I first moved here with no clue about all the advantages here in this facility. All I can say is I've been so lucky. I feel blessed to be in this facility right in this city... (PROFESSIONAL)*

Footballers' views suggest that facilities, services and benefits of the club determine their level of commitment. In this category it is seen that amateur footballers did not share their views. This finding suggests that amateur footballers had no well-furnished facilities which lacked the means provided to professional clubs.

F5's view on “*Coach experience, expertise and technical knowledge*” is as shown below;

*F5: Coach must know how to guide the player on the field, while training he must be well aware of all the technical and tactical expertise, various methods of exercise... In short we must sense that our coach knows much more than what we know and he is just like that. This is what boosts our motivation... (AMATEUR)*

It is worth noting that amateur footballers shared their views below this category. Footballers believed that their coach must have technical and tactical expertise and in the event that a coach dispossess such qualities, their level of motivation and commitment would be negatively affected.

F15’s views on “*Contract term*” are as seen below;

*F15: One of the factors that bonds me to my club and my city is my passion for football but there is also a three-year contract term but after all no one can foresee what might happen after three years. Will my contract be extended? Am I going to*

*sign a contract with another club? Well, no idea at all. What I know is contract-term is a major factor in my level of commitment... (PROFESSIONAL)*

F15's statement shows that contract term and club loyalty are correlated. Only one professional footballer shared his view in this matter and this finding suggests that contract term of amateur footballers is set as one year.

Below "Extra-organizational factors" theme the views of footballers on the relationship with club loyalty are such; 9 footballers classified it like seeing as a transfer step-plans to find a new job, 9 of them were motivated by the city where the club is located, 5 of them were motivated by the phenomenon of fans, 4 were motivated by the popularity and moral value of their club and 3 were motivated by extra-club social activities (Table 3).

F4 and F11 commented on "Plans to find a new job" and "seeing as a transfer step" such;

*F4: Football players are naturally at the heart and soul of football. My personal plan is to stay in football industry even my career as a footballer ends like working a coach after then. During these times when I am close to end my football career, If I remain attached to my club I can most likely to work within this club in subsequent years... (AMATEUR)*

*F11: I consider myself as a footballer who is loyal to his club. I play in this team because I believe if I continue my performance with high motivation I can settle in a club where I am comfortable in every way. My desire is to lead a fruitful season and be transferred; this is of course the wish of every young footballer... (PROFESSIONAL)*

In this part amateur footballers declared that they were committed to their club so as to plan their professional career whereas professional footballers stated that they viewed their current club as a step to be transferred to a more prolific football club.

F11's views on "the city where the Club is located" is as below;

*F11: I am a footballer with ideals and this is why I would like to be transferred to a team with high objectives. Besides Trabzon as a city is also another factor since here, football always takes the forefront. This is a city which draws the attention of other football clubs. Moreover this is a city where it is nice to live and stay. Young footballers are much valued here... (PROFESSIONAL)*

It was detected that mainly professional footballers shared their views on the category of city where the club is located. Footballers focused on the fact that football's popularity in Trabzon city where footballers are watched for potential transfers is another factor determining their club loyalty.

F11 commented on the factor of "Supporters (Fans)" such;

*F11: Loyalty is determined by a myriad of factors. Coach, director, teammates, supporters... Supporters in particular are what matter most because if team supporters care for you and protect you, it is a feeling that holds so much value indeed... (PROFESSIONAL)*

As seen, professional footballers reported that fans played role in their club loyalty. Since amateur footballers lack a distinctive fan group behind them, it is likely that amateur footballers did not comment on this category theme.

F4 and F15 commented on the factor “Moral value of the Club, its popularity” this way;

*F4: I am from Trabzon and I've always been a fan of Trabzonspor. I play in the team of 1461 Trabzonspor. Trabzonspor is all we have. It is our sine qua non. Moral value of my club is the biggest factor behind my loyalty... (AMATEUR)*

*F15: It was always my childhood dream, playing in Trabzonspor team and I began playing in the junior team and later I became professional. That's why I chose this club. I am from Trabzon and my favorite team is Trabzonspor... (PROFESSIONAL)*

It became apparent that moral value of Trabzonspor on amateur and professional footballers played vital role in their loyalty towards club.

Views of F1 and F6 on “Extra-Club social activities” are such;

*F1: Extra activities can be organized to boost a footballer's commitment. I mean going to the cinema, eating out or organizing social activities with team members. These activities are what can bond all team members. For instance, when the coach is always together with footballers outside of the club and when directors meet footballers outside too, it is quite important to ensure cooperation and coordination in the team... (AMATEUR)*

*F6: Social activities held outside of the club are really important to strengthen commitment and attain success. It is motivating, such activities are really a source of inner motive... (PROFESSIONAL)*

In relation to social activities held outside of club, both amateur and professional footballers argued that extra-club social activities are motivational factors within the club and can boost coordination.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Findings of this study manifested that several factors play a determinant role in organizational commitment of footballers towards their professional club. Data collected from the interviews held with footballers indicate that senior amateur footballers already began to make plans for their future and since they approached the end of their physical endurance to play as footballer, their fear to find an alternative career could be a determinant factor in their level of commitment. It is worth noting that at the end of their career as players, amateur footballers wished to “stay in the club as a coach” or “continue their career in sports in a different status”, hence they committed to their team more devotedly. However, among professional athletes, this is an invalid notion. In the same vein, in Allen and Meyer’s (1990) study, significance in three separate dimensions were sought between organizational commitment and age variable and it was concluded that in parallel with the rise in the age of individuals their level of commitment also increased. Ersoy, Bişgin, Karayol and Atakan (2014) also attained identical results and they suggested that the longer time employees spend in a company the more they identify with the institute.

In this study, amateur footballers reported that since they were married they rejected the idea of playing for a club in a different city, and professional footballers playing in Trabzon city but not originally from Trabzon would like to play football in a team in their hometown. These findings indicate that family factor lies at the forefront for footballers. Both for the amateur and professional footballers who are married, family is a key actor on their club loyalty and Akyol,

Atan and Gökmen (2013) explained that since married employees already have duties at home, they are more disciplined in job continuity and loyalty when compared to single workers. In terms of the effect of training status (amateur-professional) on club loyalty, amateur footballers shared no views and it is suggested that unlike professional athletes, as they have no facility they could not share views on the services and means provided by the facility. Likewise since amateur footballers don't have a fan group regularly following their matches and contract terms in Turkey are set only for a year, their reality does not match the reality of professional athletes. It is suggested that as such activities are offered to footballers playing in professional clubs their loyalty towards club was affected positively. In parallel with this research Soyer, Can and Akbulut (2010) also obtained significant results in favor of professionals. Interviews held with professional footballers about the effect of footballers' league level on organizational commitment showed that financial means of club were quite significant and regular and timely payments were effective on the commitment level of footballers. Interview findings also indicated that this factor offered great contribution to the motivation and success of a club. As is the case for professional footballers, among amateur footballers common idea is to ensure that payments of the club are always regular. Data from the study of Adiloğulları (2011) in relevant literature reveal that highest scores were attained by footballers in super league. It is worth noticing that amateur footballers are footballers who place income they receive from and outside of club as the second determinant factor on their level of commitment. They stated that since they were players in amateur league it would be unwise for them at this stage to prioritize money for their future career. Besides they accentuated that although many other clubs promised higher amounts of payment, in reality, they failed to pay regular checks whereas despite promising lower wages some of the clubs caused no problem in regular payment. Footballers also stated that if club management stick with consistency it affected their motivation and commitment positively.

Another factor accentuated by footballers is keeping up with given promises. Particularly during transfer season, directors of amateur clubs make promises such as "there will be no delayed payments" and "there will be timely and regular payments" but during the season when delays occur it may create negative effect on footballers' loyalty towards the club. Research findings also showed that some amateur athletes attained no income at all and among these players the biggest factor behind their club loyalty was their passion for football. Amateurship as a concept does not include in itself taking advantage or gaining material benefits (Erdemli, 2012) and many of them played with no income expectations and as they considered their future career in football, they viewed amateur football as a step to future (paying no heed to material gains) Obtained results of the research are as expected. In support of this research Adiloğulları (2011) reported that footballers who deemed their annual income level satisfactory had higher organizational commitment than footballers not satisfied with their income and their affective and continuous commitment level was also significantly higher than unsatisfied players. Related to the effect of revenues from and outside of the football club on the commitment level of professional players, Angle and Perry (1981) claimed that by forsaking great amounts of payment a good number of sportsmen continued their football career in the team they loved deeply, formed a strong bond and felt as a part and many of the footballers preferred not to put on wearing the uniform of clubs which fail to hold moral values (despite paying huge sums of money to their footballers). Results collected from this study also follow align with this deduction.

As seen, although not receiving wage, some of the professional footballers would not complain playing for their club to which they feel like belonging. Also based on interview records it can be detected that financial gains came only second because of their loyalty and sense of

belonging and in addition to their sense of ownership (belonging) feeling of sincerity (kindness) also determined their club loyalty. In the formation of this friendly ambiance emotional and cooperative bonds forged between the coach, director, teammates and team employees played a vital role. Prioritizing the families it is seen that footballers' stressed upon the value of material benefits to provide comfort for their family. This finding suggests that family factor also plays significant role in the material dimensions of footballers.

It became obvious in the research that footballers also mentioned some other factors that determined club loyalty and one of these determinants is social activities held outside of the club together with footballers, team coach and club director. At the end of these interviews it was seen that extra-club social activities mentioned by both the amateur and professional footballers determined their loyalty. For instance, they stated that when the coach and directors spend time with footballers outside of the club, that incidence would empower the feeling of unity and cooperation and also extra-club activities held among the teammates would further cement their friendship ties thereby indirectly strengthening loyalty to their club. Another factor is expertise and technical mastership of club coach. In relation to this factor, amateur footballers reported that their coach should be someone capable of directing the match in the field, having extensive technical-tactical knowledge and as felt by all of the teammates, he should be more knowledgeable than the entire team. Statements by the footballers revealed that a coach furnished with such distinguishing features would be a reinforcer in their level of commitment. Another factor is related to the city where the club is located and it is worth noticing that professional footballers in particular emphasized that factor in the interview. Participants underlined that Trabzon city being united with football stood out as a shining star in transfer seasons. Footballers noticeably accentuated that Trabzon was a city always synonymous with football and thus acted as a magnet for other football clubs and became a hotspot for footballer watch during transfer season. Besides it was detected from their viewpoints that Trabzon offered good life standards as a city and in this city young players in particular were highly respected. Another worthy finding in this research is that for amateur and professional footballers alike in Trabzonspor, the club created a notable moral value. In these interviews it became apparent that their love for Trabzonspor dated back to early childhood years and the underlying motive in choosing this club for their career was being dedicated fans of Trabzonspor.

Based on the findings of this research it became evident in this analysis that among amateur footballers reaching the end of their football career, fear of finding an alternative source of income forced them to maintain club loyalty and this finding suggests that this is a sign of worry for their own future. In order to suppress this anxiety dominating amateur footballers, it is suggested that once their career as active footballers comes to an end, authorized bodies find alternative options to assign them in different positions in the world of sports. As social and physical services in amateur clubs matter a lot in boosting footballers' club loyalty, it is highly important to improve the social and physical conditions (facilities) of a club; in order to ensure financial welfare of amateur and professional footballers, regular and timely payments by club management would be quite effective; hence in order to raise footballers' level of commitment these factors should always be foregrounded. Besides, considering the effect of unity, cooperation and emotional bonds on club loyalty, it is deemed important to organize extra-club social activities that can unite directors, coaches, footballers and club staff.

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