



Gender-Stereotyped Barriers Against Women Football Players in Turkey: A Qualitative Perspective on the Eccles' Expectancy-Value Theory

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research aimed to investigate the experiences of women football players in Turkey in terms of Eccles' Expectancy-Value Theory from a gender stereotypes perspective. A phenomenological method was used to allow a deeper understanding of their experiences. The research group consisted of eight women from three different football league levels in Istanbul, TR. The data were analyzed via thematic and content analysis. The identified themes after content analysis are: (1) loving football; (2) instrumentality of football; (3) sociocultural barriers against women players; (4) multidimensional perceived costs. According to these findings, we can illustrate that the social, cultural, and institutional environment of the women players creates many problems, difficulties, and deprivations in their participation, which make it difficult for their expectancy for success, task values, and future plans in their sports. In order to make the experiences of female football players about gender-based stereotypes more understandable, it is recommended that more studies that deal with the qualitative method and Eccles' theory should be done in future studies.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender stereotypes and inequalities exist in most practices, including sports, worldwide (Metcalf, 2018). Despite a long way, women are guided in the occupations seen as women-appropriated domains in societies. However, they remain underrepresented in many sports as well as college majors such as physical sciences, technology, engineering, math, and economics (Boxill, 2006; Wegemer & Eccles, 2019). Upon the gender inequality and stereotypes in sports, Pfister (2010) suggests that:

“The gender of sport in the past was clearly and conspicuously masculine. From the very beginning, women in sport were the ‘other sex’; they were outsiders, new- or latecomers who, if they were allowed to at all, could take part in ‘suitable’ forms of exercise and sport” (p. 234).

As Pfister explains above, many sports including football, are still considered as men’s territories. Even though a recent report from the Women’s Sports Foundation (Staurowsky et al., 2015) indicates that girls gain benefits from sports and participation in sports has increased, the same report shows that boys have more opportunities than girls in sports. Sport has continued to thrive by structuring men’s privilege almost all over the world (Joseph & Anderson, 2016). Media outlets provide daily commonsense, physical proof, apparent that women are “naturally” inferior to men in the sport. Thus, men’s dominant status is still strengthened while women’s sports are regarded as subordinated and less exciting (Fink et al., 2016). This men-centered culture of sport is touted as a central component of this gender segregation, reflected in patterns of women self-selecting out of the sport as an occupational choice. Furthermore, girls’ participation during adolescence is 2-3 times more likely to drop out than boys. Girls’ participation in men-dominated sport is even lower (Guillet et al., 2006; Abadi & Gill, 2020).

Women and Football

On the 5th of December 1921, the English Football Association (FA) issued a ban prohibiting women’s football matches from taking place on pitches owned by clubs associated with the FA (Jenkel, 2021). From those days to the 90s, the FIFA Women’s World Cup was established in 1991, and women’s football became an Olympic sport in 1996 (Pfister, 2015). After these developments, early studies on women’s football appeared in a special 2003 issue of the journal Soccer and Society. Researchers analyzed opportunities and challenges for women players considering the gender order in diverse national settings. Then, feminist-

sociologist scholars such as Connell and Messner identified barriers, such as traditional notions of femininity and prejudices about women's abilities and explored the politics of federations and their impact on the development of the game (Pfister, 2015). In the 2010s, studies focused on the intersection of gender with other identities, such as ethnicity and sexuality, to provide a deeper understanding of women's experiences with football. There has been a trend toward feminist studies with cultural and sociological basis, such as economy, media, inequality, discrimination, and body in the last decade (Pfister, 2015; Okholm-Kryger et al., 2021).

Although football appears to be integrated neither-gendered sports according to some studies (Sobal & Milgrim, 2019), it is a sport played considering male-dominated rules and needs socioculturally (Fredricks and Eccles, 2005; Abadi & Gill, 2020). Due to male-dominated societal thought in football, girls and women are considered inappropriate and excluded from the playing field (Martínez-García & Rodríguez-Menéndez, 2021; Fredrick & Eccles 2005). For instance, boys mostly use sexist language that prevented girls from playing football. Furthermore, girls who play football are described as 'tomboys' and occupy a marginal role (Aktan, 2021; Devonport et al., 2019). Looking at the international level, women's football retains a peripheral place in England as a whole (Pielichaty, 2019). Similarly, the characterization of football serves to solidify a stereotype of women players as 'butch' in Germany by marginalizing women's football (Meier et al., 2020). Also, women's football in Israel is like "a tree falling in the forest': Who sees it? Who hears it? Who cares about it, aside from the players?" (Ben Porat, 2020, p. 9). The cultural climate and the football institutions restrict women's movements and football remains the territory of men in all over the world (Ben Porat, 2020).

Football and Women in Turkey

Although the Republic of Turkey was established as a secular state, patriarchal and Islamic values influentially appear in public and social institutions (Aktan, 2021). The country as a mainstream Muslim nation and women are attached to their conventions and traditions. The Turkish Football Federation and sport clubs' executives repose upon these conventions and traditions; thus, the gap between the offices, facilities, and the number of sports (notably football) accommodating men and women athletes is entirely apparent (Yenilmez & Çelik, 2020). the women's football league was suspended by the Turkish Football Federation for three seasons in 2003 without giving any reasonable explanations. More than 200 football players found themselves without a club, and they have experienced problems such as financial

difficulties, abuse, and institutional sexist policies. The Women's League resumed in 2006 and operates with three divisions today (Aktan, 2021; Nuhurat, 2021). Moreover, in the report titled 'Mapping Gender Equality in Turkey', women experience gender inequalities because of injustices in sports participation, coaching, sports/clubs management, and sports media (Koca 2018).

Although the researches on women's football in Turkey have increased in recent years, the number of studies conducted, especially with a gender perspective, is still low. On the other hand, Öztürk (2017), who has important studies in the field, in her study conducted with Bourdieu's field theory, considers women's football as a social responsibility project by the structure and is pushed to the periphery of football. Bozlu (2019), on the other hand, examined the experiences of female athletes in the field of football, which is under the influence of male dominance, with Bourdieu's concepts of space and capital. In the study of Öztürk and Koca (2021), which they conducted with an ethnographic method and a feminist perspective, it was revealed that the denial attitudes of club managers subordinate female football players. In Nuhurat's research (2020), it was concluded that women see the football field as an instrument where they are marginalized. Nuhurat's (2021) another qualitative study negotiates gender anxieties and norms through football. Moreover, Kavasoglu and Bozok's (2022) study examined the football experiences of athletes who are not compatible with the idealized body in women's football in Turkey, with Foucault's concepts of discipline, control, and punishment.

Eccles' Expectancy-value Approach

The expectancy-value theory was directly derived from a joint psychological and sociological perspective that considers cultural beliefs such as gender stereotypes and experienced barriers that may increase the perceived cost of engaging in any particular kind of activity (Eccles, 2015; Dicke, Safavian & Eccles, 2019). Expectancy-value theory (EVT) is a multidimensional and detailed framework. Also, the theory was proposed by a set of feminist social scientists (Eccles et al., 1983). They explain at great length the cultural milieu, gender stereotypes, and gendered occupational characteristics. EVT also focuses on the role of socializers' beliefs, individuals' perceptions of socializers' beliefs, and individuals' interpretations of their experiences (Eccles et al., 1983; Eccles, 2009).

According to EVT, stereotypes, and norms affect individuals who interact with their environment (i.e., parents, peers, teammates, or coaches) in an active manner, and these social agents play a vital role in influencing one's choices in sport such as physical education, football

and track, and field (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Fredericks & Eccles, 2002; Chin et al., 2009; Banerjee et al., 2018; Chalabaev et al., 2009). Parents, for example, rate their children's sports abilities higher for boys than girls (Fredericks & Eccles, 2005). Physical education teachers and coaches also have a determining role in students' and athletes' self-competence and persistence in terms of their sexuality (Dixon et al., 2008). Those significant others' gender-related beliefs and stereotypes cause lower competence beliefs and task values for women than men in sports generally (Fredericks & Eccles, 2002; Guillet et al., 2006; Simpkins et al., 2012).

EVT has two sub-components of achievement behavior: Expectancies for success and subjective task value. *Expectancies* are shaped by individuals' perceptions of competence, ability beliefs, and personal goals, all of which are influenced by the socialization process within their cultural milieu and their own interpretations of past experiences. Subjective task value comprises four subcomponents: attainment, interest, utility value, and cost (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000; Wegemer & Eccles, 2019). *Attainment value* is engaging in an activity that affects one's self-image and social identity. Providing opportunities for fulfilling achievement, power, and social needs is related to attainment value. *Interest value* is based on enjoyment for engaging in the activity itself, and it relates most directly to the activity itself (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Eccles 2009). *Utility value* facilitates one's short or long future goals. It assists individuals with the desire to obtain long-term external rewards, which are extrinsic reasons for engaging in any activity (Zhu, 2009; Eccles & Wigfield, 2020).

Cost is loss of time, effort, and energy for other activities (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Cost is also discussed as psychological, financial, and physical. Psychological costs are negative psychological states resulting from struggle, anxiety, fear of failure (Barron & Hulleman, 2015; Flake et al., 2015), disappointment, harassment, or discrimination (Watkinson et al., 2005; Chen & Lui, 2009). Financial costs, such as minimum salary (Eccles, 2009; Zhu, 2009), and physical costs, such as injury, are other types of costs. These cost factors negatively influence individuals' achievement, motivation, and consequently, their choices (Eccles et al., 2000; Plaza et al., 2017). Until the last part, where we discuss Eccles' theory, we have touched on the historical, cultural, and sociological processes of women's football in the world and in Turkey. In the next section, we will examine the difficulties women face in the football world within the framework of Eccles' expectation-value theory and in the context of gender stereotypes.

The Present Study

In this paper, we tried to look at women's football in Turkey from the framework of the Eccles theory. In compliance with Eccles' theoretical framework, we aimed to bring out the

situation of women in football, in which there is a great variety of gender stereotypes. Specifically, we aimed to understand the role of socializers who take sides with dominant cultural and institutional values in the football domain. In the international literature, this theory has mostly been discussed from the perspective of adolescence and gender. In this research, we will focus on the experiences of adults because this framework has rarely been used to research the experiences of adults in competitive sports. We now have a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of young women in sports in terms of gender, but sports and gender literature in Turkey has not yet conducted research using this theory. We think that using this theory in this research will be beneficial in understanding the following issues.

METHODS

This research highlighted the utility of qualitative research methods to increase understanding of the lived experiences of women participating in the study. By using phenomenology design, we aimed to acquire information that is useful for understanding the complexity, depth, and variation surrounding women soccer players (Patton, 2002). As Aspers and Corte (2019) point out, we define qualitative study as an iterative process in which improved understanding of the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied (p. 155). Eccles' theoretical framework was in fact a ride from Anant who is from phenomenology, so, it is quite appropriate to the qualitative approach (Jain, 1985).

Study Group

Purposive sampling was used in this study to explore dynamics in women players' football domain (Patton, 2002). Our sample included eight women football players from three different league levels. They are also university students in Istanbul. The city of Istanbul is the center of football in Turkey and is a place where women's football has started to spread rapidly compared to other cities. However, the number of athletes both studying at university and continuing to play football in different cities was quite limited at the beginning of the study. For this reason, we could not hold meetings in other cities. The selection of players from three different leagues is to provide maximum diversity and thus to reach different experiences. These criteria were decisive in the selection of participants. Demographic information of participants can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Information about participants and personal information.

Participants Names*	Level of league	Length of Affiliation / Age	Length of interview**
Meli	First League	Six years / 20	32 min
Emessine	First League	Six years / 20	38 min
Demet	First League	Five years / 19	40 min
Nil	First League	Five years / 23	43 min
Azra	First League	Five years / 22	35 min
Gül	Second League	Five years / 22	45 min
Bade	Second League	Four years / 18	34 min
Emi	Third League	Four years / 20	30 min

*All participants were given pseudonyms to preserve anonymity and confidentiality.

**As seen in Table 1, our interviews with women players lasted shorter than the average qualitative interview times. The first reason for this is that the researcher conducting the interviews was men and therefore could not examine some of the experiences of women players in depth. This can be considered as the weak points of interviews. However, the descriptive feature of the research was also decisive in the shorter interview times.

Data Collection Tools

We used semi-structured interviews to collect the data to understand participants' reasons for pursuing careers that were incongruent with their initial aspirations (Smith & McGannon, 2018). This semi-structured format included questions about football background, experiences, barriers to football participation and continuation, and whether these barriers had been overcome (Bevan et al., 2021). Interview questions were regarding: (a) experiences of women players in the football field, such as discrimination; (b) the role of significant others in their involvements such as coaches, parents, teachers and club executives; (c) hopes and plans for the involvement in the future such as being national team player or physical education teacher; (d) perceived costs which prevent individuals from being motivated in their football careers such as time, money, effort, and injury. Players were asked to sign an informed consent form to be audio-taped. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The confidentiality of the respondents was ensured by pseudonyms (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The first author, who is an experienced qualitative researcher with a background in football participation, conducted all interviews. Eight interviews were carried out and lasted between 32 and 45 min (average of 37 min). Three interviews took place at the players' clubs and a further five at participants' schools.

Data Analysis

During analysis, our approach was both descriptive and interpretative. Descriptive and interpretative approaches to qualitative research endeavor to keep a balance between the description of phenomena and the interpretation of the described phenomena (O'Halloran et al., 2018). Given that researchers want to report concisely on what was found and given that we are by nature meaning-making individuals, it is inevitable that any findings/results will

be colored by an interpretative framework (Timulak & Elliott, 2019). Two researchers of this study and one external expert analyzed the data which gathered from eight footballers by using qualitative thematic analysis. The analysis proceeded using the six steps method described by Braun and Clarke (2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013) because it offers such a clear and usable framework for doing thematic analysis. The authors manually coded the data by using Microsoft Word document. The first author's experience as an ex-footballer about ten years, as well as football and gender studies provided great convenience to analyze.

As suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006), we firstly organized the data in the transcripts for familiarization with the data. Then reading and re-reading transcripts to become familiar with the content. Secondly, we and one external expert who studies sports and gender, separately identified features using general codes across the football player data set to the generation of initial codes. Thirdly, we discussed preliminary codes and compared interpretations of further themes to search for themes. In step four, the coded data were developed by consensus into a thematic map, whereby the researchers considered the arrangement of themes and sub-themes. In step five, definitions were derived for each label for defining and naming themes. Finally, each theme's name was organized to reflect the study's questions, the literature, and the data for producing the findings. We generally followed and interested in how the women in the football field made decisions about their involvement or discontinuation; thus we focused on passages that were coded for motivation, costs, and benefits, future plans, expectations of significant others.

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

The prominent themes that were identified from the findings of this study were stereotypes which are largely gender stereotypes and socially shared beliefs about women

players based on their sex. For example, gender bias in the football community, disregarding of significant others, insufficient support from parents, and poor physical conditions. Another theme stemming from stereotypes was related to inadequate and unqualified facilities, negative media influence, insufficient sponsorships, and very low-income levels. The costs created by barriers preventing from stereotypes are themed through findings such as disruption of education, loss of time and effort, fear of injury, and anxiety for the future. Otherwise, there was the theme of the happiness of women athletes from football and the theme of seeing football as a tool for certain achievements such as university entrance, scholarship, and being a physical education teacher.

Loving Football

One of the main reasons young people participate in sports is the fun they experience. These enjoyable experiences contribute to increase in their intrinsic motivation, love, and interest, which translates into higher quality of their involvement in sports (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Also, experiences of fun and involvement quality make it easier for young people to continue practicing their sport. Loving football theme is regarding Eccles' attainment and intrinsic values which were derived from the responses of women to the questions about feelings of success and attendance in sports (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Not surprisingly, the findings in our study showed that women players have similar good feelings about football. For example, Emessine (20 years old) shared her feelings succinctly: *"I believe that girls and women can play football because I believe I am talented. I have been playing football since my childhood."* Another player Gül (22 years old) reflected her feelings as: *"The reason I love football is that we play it with our feelings inside. When we train, we don't think the next action, it happens automatically. The most beautiful part for me is that I feel passion, relaxation, and commitment."* Another football player Azra (22 years old) expressed her thoughts about loving football as follows: *"You do football because you enjoy and love it. You don't really care what other people think. So, ultimately, it's really fun, and you have got lots of friends both on your own team and on the opposing team."*

Women players value feeling talented, having capacity, succeeding, and social acceptance for attainment. To expectancy-value theory, people's perceptions of being good at any activity seem to motivate them to keep investing effort on that activity because they perceive they have the ability. This creates attainment value to activity that provides positive psychological consequences such as self-confidence, self-efficacy, pride of achievement, and so on. (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Fredericks et al., 2002; Dicke et al., 2019). Furthermore, statements regarding intrinsic value showed that it is seen as pleasure, happiness,

commitment, passion, and suchlike. Also, the abovementioned expressions of Gül about loving football share similarities with the studies about the intrinsic value that when enjoyment is motivating for pleasure of the activity, individuals always feel deeply for activity (Eccles, 2009; Myrold & Ullrich-French, 2017; Abadi & Gill, 2020; Pielichaty, 2019). Football playing give these participants a sense of achievement and success. For example, participant Emi (20 years old) said: *"I'm happier when my teammates and coach are happy. You know, you feel great pleasure and you have more commitment as long as you succeed and win."* Similarly, Nil (23 years old) referred to the relationship between success and attachment to the team. *"I care about being in a team and being successful. Because I believe that my success has a positive effect on the team. My primary source of motivation is the support from my teammates and their hard work."*

If a particular activity is a crucial piece of his/her/their social identity, engaging in it has high attainment value for individuals, and interest value will be positively influenced (Zhu, 2009; Drane & Barber, 2016; Pielichaty, 2019). Our participant Nil's experiences above show similarities related to the importance of being on a team and being successful as a team which are her basic sources of intrinsic value. Regarding social agents, our work shows the importance of developing women players' motivation. It makes us think of the important role that significant people such as parents, teachers or coaches play in helping young women increase their confidence, pleasure, and feel of success through the interactions they have with them (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; González et al., 2019).

Instrumentality of Football

During the interviews, the participants were asked to talk about their preferences in football. They often stated common instrumental values such as being a *national team player*, *entering university*, *getting scholarships*, and being a *physical education teacher*. The women's following statements show the critical instrumentalization of football. For example, Demet (19 years old) pointed out the utility of football:

"I have two European championship participations, and I need eight more to be appointed as a teacher. That's all my concern because there is no future in football for me. That's why I attended the school. Why am I going to university? I study to become a physical education teacher. I have three more years to be selected eight times for a national team. I stand the gaff three more years. At least with this way, I can become a teacher and get a public salary regularly."

According to Azra's view, playing football was one of the most useful ways to become a physical education teacher:

“Football is not like a feature-length film for women. We can start at about fifteen years old, and we play for seven or eight years. That’s it. Fortunately, this semester, I’m a senior student in university, and I’m going to be directly appointed as a physical education teacher. I benefit from the right of open admission since I’ve been a national team player ten times.”

The financial and institutional deprivation that women experience in football brings focusing on university education and other professions as PE teacher while playing football. Football, which is not normatively identified with women, cannot be imagined as a women’s career even by women themselves. Azra also mentions above that football is a short-lived career choice for women. To pursue further career opportunities, women athletes retire from football at an early age and see football as an instrument in that process (Nuhurat, 2020). For most women football players like Emessine, the most important feature of football is that it plays an instrumental role in reaching other future plans:

“I can play football for four more years. Then, I don’t think I can play. I have irrefutable gold bracelets, such as being a national team player and having a university diploma. I will be a physical education teacher in any case.”

Both Nil and Meli (20 years old) expressed their different future plans with similar thoughts in turn:

“What does football do for women? It is just helpful to be a national player. I’ve fulfilled the criteria of being a national player ten times. It’s provided me to enroll at university through additional placement. In this way, I get a scholarship automatically from a public institution.”

“Actually, we have no other way. Even though I love playing football, I stay in the game to save my future. At least I’ll get into university, there are private schools that offer scholarships. Then I become a physical education teacher and spend the rest of my life more comfortably.”

Similar to the quotes above, in Bozlu’s (2019) study with Bourdieu’s concepts of field and capital with female football players in Turkey, the field of football for female football players is seen as an instrument for their possible future careers, such as entering a university, being a national athlete, being a physical education teacher. To Eccles, this instrumentality contains the perception of the future utilization in engaging in the task (Eccles, 2009). Correspondingly to Eccles’ frame, in our study, engaging in football is a facilitator for women to obtain short or long-term external rewards which are non-football things (Zhu, 2009). They consider football as an investment or ladder for their vocational career in the future. Getting a

scholarship, entering university, being a physical education teacher, and so forth are seen as the only way out for women in the strictly structured football context. We can see these similar trends for women players in different cultures, such as Norway, the United States, and Ireland (Bourke, 2003; Stuart, 2003; McCormack & Walseth, 2013).

In Turkey and Palestinian sample, women's football continues to be treated as a 'social project' (Öztürk, 2017; Stewart, 2012). As a social project, football plays an instrumental role that facilitating the transition of women to non-football fields rather than providing career development or opportunities. Few of them might be coaches, or sports writers, or at least all become well-educated mothers, but they may not be professional athletes who would benefit from a potential and long-term career option (Stewart, 2012; Öztürk, 2017). Also, the football community 'helps' women to integrate in formal education and business networks so they may serve as fully functioning members of society, as educated workers or teachers (Nuhurat, 2020; Stewart, 2012). Since both the women athletes themselves and the football community consider football as a male field, they do not see it as a career choice (Dicke et al., 2019; Wegemeer & Eccles, 2019; Mascarini, Vicentini & Marques 2019). This culminates in producing women's football as both instrumental and eventually trivial and 'out of place' (Nuhurat, 2021).

Sociocultural Barriers against Women Players

In any field, if there is no support or encouragement from significant others, an individual's expectancy of success and future declines dramatically. Notably, gendered approaches and interpretations of socializers strengthen stereotypes and yet decrease individuals' persistence over time (Boiché et al., 2014). In our study, sociocultural and institutional stereotypes and barriers intensely exist for women. We can see numerous barriers in women's excerpts herein below starting from Bade (18 years old):

"This year, we and the male team became champions together. Our female team became unbeaten champions, but club executives didn't give value to us as they gave the male team. For example, during the championship celebrations, club executives organized fireworks events and city bus tour for male teams. Also, the male team's championship premium was at astronomic levels. They don't appreciate their female players, and they ignore us and our labor. Actually, if we are a football team, both women and men should be the same (equal)."

Bade's emphasis on club managers shows us that institutional neglect and stereotypes are quite strong and rooted. This emphasis reflects a recent study by Öztürk and Koca (2021) that club management did not see women as football players but just as women,

and they were unwilling to maintain women's football at the club and looking for excuses to close it down. Another participant Emessine referred to other difficulties in women's football:

"Men have their own training equipment. Their uniforms are stitched fit size for their body, but we have to wear uniforms which are stitched for their body occasionally. They train whenever they want, but our training schedule is timed according to their situation. For example, if their training ends at 7.30, we have to train at 8.00. Even the pitch is sometimes filled, so we cancel our training. Men have all facilities available like training and match. To tell the truth, how much do we develop with only two trainings in a week? Also, we are forced to use men's changing rooms and toilets."

As Emessine point out, women share changing rooms and football uniforms with men. Öztürk and Koca (2021) have found similar results. In their findings, the basic necessities such as restrooms, showers, and lockers generally were not available for women players in the facilities. Another study by Öztürk and Koca (2018) in Turkey shows close results that women have restricted space in clubhouses, limited transportation, equipment, and uniforms. Also, Emessine's expressions about discriminatory training schedule are very similar with English women football players. Women's trainings are scheduled depending on the men's team training schedule as well as they do not have the best facilities to train or play because of the lower status of women's teams in the club (Welford, 2018; Peeters & Sterkenburg, 2017). The study in Norway found that boys have training camps, free clothing, tournaments, transportation, and trips abroad, but girls have to pay for them. Boys have professional coaches, while girls do not (Eriksen, 2021). Poor facilities, inadequate equipment, and shared changing rooms are major problems for women players in the cases of Turkey, England, and Norway. Another example of barriers comes from Nil:

"Neither the media nor sponsors make a significant contribution to the women football field. For example, the women football league isn't aired on televisions. Further, our football isn't newsworthy in newspapers. Additionally, sometimes I think maybe we are treated as a U11 Development League by the Turkish Football Federation. Even you have great ability there's no sufficient motivation -which will bring success for women- such as fans, support of club, sponsors, media, proper salary, and guidance of coaches."

The abovementioned statements demonstrate that authorities and institutions such as media, sponsors, television, newspapers, federations, clubs' executives, and fans act in unison against women players. The lack of media interest in women's football leads to the fact that sponsors likewise take no interest in the sport, which in turn influences the game and

development, thus contributing generally to its marginalization (Hardin & Greer, 2009; Peeters & Sterkenburg, 2017; Kaelberer, 2019; Bevan et al., 2021). However, even any success does not change their secondary status in the club or increase the opportunities and sources allocated to the team (Öztürk & Koca, 2021). When young women players experience these barriers, such as training conditions, poor facilities, and underrepresentation of women players in media it is more likely that their involvement is of low quality which leads to greater sport drop-out (González et al., 2019).

It is similar to the immediate vicinity which Eccles et al. (1983) entitle as the cultural milieu in where family members, peers, teachers, and cultural beliefs live. Azra's experience is about the physical education teacher:

"During high school, our physical education teacher didn't consider me seriously when I asked his permission to come into the camp for the match at the weekend. He always answered me bitingly satirical and asked what the connection with me and football is."

Demet, on the other hand, was discriminated against by her friends because she played football:

"I have often faced verbal discrimination or social barriers such as 'Can girls play football?', 'Is that the ball we know?', 'Do you play with your hand or foot?'. Sometimes, I have been exposed to sexist discourses as 'Guys kick the ball softly; don't you see, the goalkeeper is a girl!' Most of my friends have acted in similar ways."

Gül also stated that her mother tried to steer her from football to basketball: *"I loved playing football, but my mom tried to change my mind. She would take a dim view of me for playing football. Because she thought my face doesn't fit with football. She wanted me to be basketball player."* In parallel with the experience of Azra, Demet and Gül above, in Turkey and other countries, physical education teachers, peers and mothers have lower expectations for girls and women in football (Bozlu, 2019; Nuhurat, 2020; Banerjee et al., 2018; Stirling & Schulz, 2011). Also, coaches and administrators in male-dominated sports have lower expectations for women athletes (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Eccles, 2011; Dixon et al., 2008; Öztürk & Koca, 2021). Briefly stated, sociocultural perceptions of socializers in society adversely affect women and they feel worthless in football. Women who were interviewed indicate a lack of (professional) athletic opportunities for themselves. Low expectancy of success, feeling insufficient, subordinate, alienation, or dropping out from their sport may occur for women due to cultural barriers and beliefs of significant others (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004, 2005; Simpkins et al., 2012; Boiché et al., 2014; González et al., 2019). Participant Gül, explains the reasons why women are left behind in football as follows:

“I think boys find an opportunity to participate in football at a very early age, simply just because boys’ gender role norms are found acceptable to play football both at an early age and everywhere. That’s why ninety percent of boys find a chance to play football while five percent of girls have access to play.”

According to Gül, starting football at a very early age provides advantages for boys. On the other hand, girls generally start or specialize in football very late. Like many other activities in society, football has certainly been gendered as male (Peeters & Sterkenburg, 2017). Due to extreme cultural and sexist pressures against girls during childhood not to play football, women train, practice, and compete in their sport by coming from behind (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Svensson & Oppenheim, 2018; Mascarini et al., 2019; Öztürk & Koca, 2021). Multiple examples of stereotypes and barriers are commonly constructed in the football domain. For instance, women in South Africa haven’t received equal remuneration compared to the men’s national team. Lack of sponsorships, publicity, and recognition leave women players in disadvantaged positions. Also, they are faced with inequalities such as access to facilities/resources and quality sporting equipment (Engh, 2011; Pelak, 2005; Braciska, 2018). Notably, parents, peers, teachers, and other socializers encircle women football players with sociocultural barriers. Afore-mentioned examples function as a sociocultural barrier to inhibit women in the football domain (Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; Swanson, 2016).

Multidimensional Perceived Costs

Schoon and Eccles (2014) concluded that male-dominated fields work to reproduce inequalities which may be perceived as a cost. In Turkey, being a football player was a cost itself for women. Thus, we aim to reflect women’s tough life in football, where there are lots of inequalities and discriminations that can be considered as costs. Participants emphasis on the cost of football demonstrates the existing structural inequalities. Meli talked about missing opportunities: *“I play football and earn barely. If I worked elsewhere, I would earn more; I could advance in my career and invest in the future.”* Demet, on the other hand, mentioned that they were ignored: *“Neglect of clubs, the rarity of clubs, insufficient facilities of clubs, visionless club chairmen, professional unqualification of coaches. We have limited means and have nowhere to go in football for the future.”* Emi, another participant, stated that after being injured, they were made to feel completely worthless and unnecessary: *“For clubs, if players get injured, they fall into oblivion. If you get better by yourself, it’s ok. Otherwise, they say nothing. Injury is the most frightening and disappointing thing you are faced with.”*

These quotes dramatically highlight the difficulties for women in football. Financial problems, concern for the future, and fear of injury are some of the perceived costs. Injury,

coach's care, future planning, and financial issues are uncertain issues for girls and women who don't benefit from many sports opportunities (Zdunek & Nowak, 2018; Öztürk & Koca, 2021). Clubs provide men with a chance to get into a career of sports. Also, Nuhra't's (2020) study in Turkey shows that women cannot consider pursuing football as a career since it offers them very low financial income (Nuhra't, 2020). In our study, women also share other types of costs. Bade points out the missing opportunities:

"You do lots of things but you think you can't be rewarded for your efforts. Hence, this situation discourages you. You start thinking you miss opportunities as educational, social and economic. You renounce from lots of things such as being with your friends."

Meli conveys her opinions about her effort, and she is aware of being pissing into the wind:

"I care about football like men. I relinquish some things, even though I work harder than men but am seeing less value than men. I said to myself that I take pains with football but do not see the equal value."

As is also understood from the examples, inegalitarian and tough experiences cause disappointment for women, and they perceive various types of costs such as missing opportunities (i.e. time, education, health, other socialization fields, occupation), renouncing (from friends or family), getting rejected (from clubs and society), taking pains and being emotionally hurt (Watkinson et al., 2005; Chen & Liu, 2009; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Dicke et al., 2019). However, another participant, Nil, expressed "cost" with feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness:

"Can you believe that when we became champions, during the celebrations, our only wish was to step on the grass of the team stadium, where we never played our matches. But the club managers did not allow it. When you see that all that effort, success, and happiness has no value in their eyes, you feel both worthless and hopeless. You think you have no future, and you don't want to continue the game."

She and her teammates couldn't set foot on the pitch because of club management's discriminative policy. In Nuhra't's study (2020) in Turkey, women players have similar experiences. For example, the champion women football team wants the ceremony to be either at half-time or just before the game. In this way, the stadium will be full, and they will be able to greet the fans. This isn't allowed by club management. They enter the stadium before the men's team warm-up and raise the championship cup in the empty stadium. In England, Arsenal women's football team also can't play in the Arsenal stadium for similar discriminative reasons above (Peeters & Sterkenburg, 2017). Eccles also argues that women are faced with barriers that lead to various kinds of costs including dropping out because the

mechanisms of institutions -including organized sport- where all the conditions are identified for men (Eccles, 2011; Wegemer & Eccles, 2019). In our study, participants think to drop out due to similar reasons. For example, Gül who was deeply attached to football talked about the inevitability of quitting football.

“Sometimes I have the feeling of giving up football. Because you play every year and improve yourself, but football is a thankless job; you don’t have two pennies to rub together. There is no tangible motivation towards your success; that’s why, I think we make ourselves miserable by keeping on playing.”

Meli also stated that costs such as economic difficulties and injury are important reasons for not being able to continue playing football:

“I can play till I’m in my thirties, but now I don’t want to due to the financial difficulties, club’s poor support, especially in the process of injury. At first, I didn’t care about material rights, but then you can’t receive a recompense for your work; that’s a problem. Also, it hinders me from my school and my lessons. When I consider all of these, it drives me to quit football.”

Gender and football stereotypes are deeply ingrained in sport culture. This culture normalizes gendered stereotypes that are significant predictors of dropping out, low self-perception, and a for women (Cress & Hart, 2009; Boiché et al., 2014). In football, cultural and structural inequalities cause women to face the reality such as financial difficulties, injuries, quitting football, and neglect of school (Stasi & Evans, 2013; Flake et al., 2015; Schoon & Eccles, 2014). These various kinds of costs prompt women to have negative thoughts about their football future. Especially, financial difficulties led them not to plan for their future. For instance, Gül and Meli frame these “financial costs” as not receiving a recompense for their work and not having a penny. These costs are similar in most countries. Women football players do not make a living from football (Williams, 2017). Even at the top level, the financial resources might not be enough for women’s teams (Welford, 2018). Despite most women playing football in the first league in our sample, their economic resources are limited, and women cannot earn money from football (Nuhurat, 2020; Öztürk & Koca, 2021).

However, Wegemer and Eccles (2019) explicitly highlight that women’s altruistic occupational values are stronger than men in most occupations or professions. These altruistic values and behaviors of women cause them to be weaker and underpaid in the already men-dominated football profession. Since women players are weak and statusless on football field, they do not claim their rights. Most of women players have second jobs as they don’t get paid enough to rely solely on their income from football (Peeters & Sterkenburg, 2017). All these

gender-stereotyped dimensions are common and significant dimensions of cost. Eccles (2011) transparently declared that the cost women pay is often seen in their wages, their rate of advancement, and the stress they experience. Furthermore, the football community neither provides the types of services, supports, and employment policies nor rewards women's accomplishments and competencies appropriately (Zdunek & Nowak, 2018; Öztürk & Koca, 2021). Even when women succeed in men-dominated occupations, they are often paid less than men, despite having the same or higher-level qualifications and experience (Schoon & Eccles, 2014; Nuhurat, 2020). We can say that the cost women have gained in football cause them to diminish motivation, love, value of football, performance, and future expectations or plans. Thus, in general, women players' decisions about the future are strongly in the direction of quitting football.

CONCLUSION

Even today, the perception that women do not belong to their football "places" is very established (Nuhurat, 2020). In this regard, our study sought to demonstrate that women openly and frequently reported many impossibilities and inequalities in football. We noticed that the rules, norms, and priorities are identified for men, and it creates additional gendered barriers for girls and women to participate or persist in football. They aren't treated as equal football player peers of male ones. Despite being strong, competent, and independent, they are subordinated and made to conform to cultural stereotypes. As Bozlu (2019) said, the relations of female football players with their environment are an indication that the football field is under male dominance in Turkey.

Stereotypic messages, interactions, and endorsing gender stereotypes for the benefit of the men in football lead women to feel lower self-perceptions and incompetent. These feelings cause lower value of football and intentions to practice, and the more perceived cost and quitting football (Fredericks & Eccles, 2005; Boiché et al., 2014; Nuhurat, 2020). When we look through the world of football -England, South Africa, Malaysia, France, Mexico, Turkey, Israel, Germany, and so- it strictly and systematically has gendered discourse to the detriment of women (Pielichaty, 2019; Chin et al., 2009; Bois et al., 2005; Chalabaev et al., 2009; McHale et al., 2009; Bhalla & Weiss, 2010; Öztürk & Koca, 2021; Ben Porat, 2020; Kaelberer, 2019). As Caudwell (2011) suggests that there are not only official (institutional) but also unofficial (sociocultural) norms and legitimations. The reproduction of men-privileged ideology has a determinant role on the belief that the women athlete is subordinated in organized football (Messner, 1988; Cress & Hart, 2009; Pfister, 2010; Wegemer & Eccles, 2019).

Studies on women's participation in football describe a number of issues and barriers faced by women because of gender stereotypes and segregations (Mascarini et al., 2019; Williams, 2017). These issues are insufficient support from family and significant others from the beginning of a football career; the prejudice, label, and discredit regarding the involvement of women in football; the limited practice opportunities for girls who wish to practice football. For these reasons, gender stereotypes are institutionalized by the consequent naturalization of cultural barriers against women. This process of stereotyping creates barriers to women's participation in sports, reproducing a kind of men's symbolic domination, especially in sports such as football (Fredericks & Eccles, 2005; Mascarini et al., 2019; Welford, 2018). Besides, social agents play an important role in subordinating and trivializing women's positions in football instead of helping and supporting them (Nuhurat, 2020; Devonport et al., 2019). Thus, cultural discourse used by social agents mounts against women because men get more opportunities to play football from a young age onwards as structured in society's institutions and societal norms and values (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Peeters & Sterkenburg, 2017).

Besides the significant others, football institutions such as clubs, federations, and sports media are equally responsible for the subordination of women. These institutions are complicit in the lack of publicity for women's football by underfunding it and paying them infrequently. The lack of financial support has an impact on their training, indeed training on a weekly basis is not always possible as well as their performance on the field. These institutions bear responsibility for the dire situation in which women footballers find themselves (Ben Porat, 2018; Nuhurat, 2020; Kaelberer, 2019). Due to these reasons, the intrinsic qualities of women football players are a kind of consolation that is not enough to continue.

The study clearly showed that women football players in Turkey experience more fundamental inequalities and costs related to financial (i.e., wages, facilities, accommodation, fixtures, health) and moral (i.e., being valued, supported, being considered an athlete) conditions. These moral conditions stem from media invisibility, poor advertising, and sponsorship, lack of recognition and public support, lack of guidance of coaches, and lack of support of clubs and awards. The fact remains that patriarchal values and thoughts such as 'football is the sport of men' or 'football is a man thing' have led to make it hard and fragile for women to be part of the 'game', to be accepted and empowered because of the historical, socio-cultural, and institutional barriers in football in Turkey. These gendered barriers and codes have been leading women to stay on the periphery or to be alienated from the football field (Öztürk & Koca, 2018). Consequently, we can say that it is still tough for women to crack the door open, come on in, play the game, and get empowered by football in Turkey.

As conclusion, this research will contribute to the inclusion of studies from the field of sports psychology with a gender perspective in the literature of women and football. A theoretical approach that has not been studied in the field of sports in Turkey before will be included in the sports literature of the country. It is also an important and empowering gain that it contains similarities with the studies conducted in Turkey in the field of sports sociology. Thus, these results will add both novelty and richness to the literature.

Limitations

The results of this study have some limitations. The players in our research were selected only from the province of Istanbul and those studying at the university. The fact that the number of qualitative studies conducted with Eccles' theory is quite low has created a limitation in feeding the discussion. Another limitation was that our interviews with women players lasted shorter. For future studies, it is proposed to carry out research that address the perspective of family, coaches, and managers in order to seek a broader understanding of women's football.

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Conflict of interest declaration

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors and no financial interest or benefit has arisen from the direct application of this research.

Author contributions

Authors were involved in all sections of the present research; including the stages of writing, data collection and analyses, discussion, and revision.

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