

Examination of Athletic Identity and Perceived Stress Levels of Candidates
Taking the Exams for the Faculty of Sports Sciences

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine the Athlete Identity and Perceived Stress Levels of Candidates Taking the Faculty of Sports sciences exams. 473 people who applied to the 2023 Ahi Evran University sports department special talent exam were included in the research. A personal information form, 10-item athlete identity scale, and a 4-item perceived stress scale were used. The original text of the Athlete Identity Assessment Scale seven-point Likert-type scale consisting of ten items in total (1= strongly disagree). This scale consists of a single dimension to determine the athlete identities of the participants. In order to determine the perceived stress levels of individuals, the "Perceived Stress Scale" was used. In the Turkish adaptation study of the scale, validity and reliability studies were conducted for the 10-item and 4-item short forms as well as the 14-item long version. As a result of the statistical analyses, while the participants' athlete identity scores did not differ according to the variables of gender, age and economic status, they differed according to the variables of undergraduate and career hope. It was observed that the participants' perceived stress scores did not differ in terms of all variables. It was observed that the participants' athlete identity and perceived stress scores had a low-level negative and significant relationship.

Keywords: Athlete Identity, Perceived Stress, Special Ability Exams.

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**Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi Sınavlarına Giren Adayların
Sporcu Kimliği ve Algılanan Stres Düzeylerinin
İncelenmesi**

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi sınavlarına giren adayların sporcu kimliği ve algılanan stres düzeylerinin incelenmesidir. Araştırmaya 2023 yılı Ahi Evran Üniversitesi spor bölümü özel yetenek sınavına müracaat eden 473 kişi dahil edilmiştir. Araştırmada verilerin toplanması hedefiyle kişisel bilgi formu, 10 maddeli "Sporcu Kimliği Ölçeği" ayrıca 4 maddelik "Algılanan Stres Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Sporcu Kimliği Değerlendirme Ölçeği orijinal metni toplam on maddeden oluşan yedili likert tipi bir ölçektir (1= kesinlikle katılmıyorum, 7= kesinlikle katılıyorum). Bu ölçek katılımcıların sporcu kimliklerini belirlemeye yönelik tek boyuttan oluşmaktadır (kendimi sporcu olarak görürüm, kendimi öğrenci olarak görürüm). Bireylerin algıladıkları stres düzeylerini belirlemek amacıyla ise Cohen vd. (1983) tarafından geliştirilen, Eskin ve vd. (2013) tarafından Türkçe'ye uyarlanan Algılanan Stres Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Ölçeğin Türkçe uyarlama çalışmasında 14 maddelik uzun versiyonun yanı sıra 10 madde ve 4 maddelik kısa formlarının geçerlilik ve güvenilirlik çalışması yapılmıştır. İlgili verilerin karşılaştırılmasında Dağılım, Frekans, T testi, ANOVA testi ve Basit Kolerasyon analizi yapılmıştır. İstatistiksel analizler sonucunda katılımcıların sporcu kimliği puanlarının cinsiyet, yaş ve ekonomik durum değişkenine göre farklılık göstermezken, lisans ve meslek umudu değişkenlerine göre farklılaşmıştır. Katılımcıların algılanan stres puanlarının ise tüm değişkenler açısından farklılık göstermediği görülmüştür. Ayrıca katılımcıların sporcu kimliği ve algılanan stres puanlarının düşük düzeyde negatif ve anlamlı bir ilişkiye sahip olduğu gözlenmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sporcu Kimliği, Algılanan Stres, Özel Yetenek Sınavı.

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Introduction

The search for identity is one of the fundamental features of development. “Identity is a subjective sense of wholeness, consistency, and continuity that indicates that we are who we used to be; ‘who am I?’” Our answer to the question is that we are a unique individual, different from everyone else. This feeling is related to our physical structure as well as our memories, value judgments, beliefs, experiences and gender, ethnicity, age, status. It is shaped by our social position, our professional situation and how others perceive us (Budak, 2000). Erikson talks about a crisis during adolescence and the role of the environment in which the person lives in overcoming this crisis. According to Erikson, the most important condition for the normal transition to adulthood is identity acquisition. The process of identity formation is a psychological phenomenon that begins in adolescence. Its formation and completion within this period are indispensable for other stages of personality. There is no point in talking about other developmental periods of a person whose identity has not developed in this period. Because, according to Erikson's theory, previous periods form a basis for later periods. Developing a balanced sense of identity towards the end of adolescence forms the basis of individual development towards gaining personality integrity towards maturity (Erikson, 1993, as cited in Çetinkaya, 2010).

According to Brewer, athlete identity is the revealing of the athletic role displayed together with the self-identity (Brewer et al., 1993). Athlete identity exists in important social dimensions such as experiences that affect self-concept, social interplay with other people and engagement in sporting activities (Cornelius, 1995; Çetinkaya, 2010). Identity is a developmental feature that also makes itself felt in the hierarchy of needs. In every developmental period starting from birth, certain needs of that period emerge and are motivated to meet these needs (Kuşat, 2003). Perhaps the most interesting theory about these needs and motivations was put forward by humanist psychologist Maslow. Maslow defines human needs as physical, psycho-social (security, love, self-confidence-self-esteem, self) and spiritual (cognitive, aesthetic, religion and self-actualization) needs since birth. As people's needs are met from bottom to top, they try to reach other needs that are one level above them in the hierarchy (Maslow, 1968). A strong athlete identity can pave the way for an easier athlete's life and easier achievement of targeted success. Therefore, it is important to determine the level of athlete identity that athletes have and it seems valuable to determine the steps to be taken to strengthen this identity.

Stress; It is expressed as experiences that cause psychological or physiological problems caused by people and the environment in which people live (Güzel, 2019). According to Cüceloğlu, (1994) stress is “an effort expended by a person beyond his/her physical and spiritual limits due to incompatible circumstances in the living space and social ambient.”

Stress occupies a large part of our lives in our age and plays a very effective role. (Eskin et al., 2013). Stress refers to the stress levels that people feel about the situations in their lives, and the more negative the individuals' feelings and thoughts about these situations are It is stated that the stress levels they perceive will also be high (Gümüştekin and Öztemiz, 2005; Asıcı and Uygur, 2017). Academic studies show that stress disease has frightening effects on the human body. (Schneiderman et al., 2005). This stress that the individual is exposed to not only causes physical, emotional, behavioral and spiritual problems, but also can lead to various permanent diseases (Özel, 2018). As in almost every field, the concept of stress and anxiety is an extremely important issue for athletes to deal with. Perceived stress can negatively affect athletes' performance, preventing them from being successful.

With all this conceptual planning, the purpose of this work will be to examine the athlete identity and perceived stress levels of sports science faculty candidates.

Material and Method

During the current research, the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" was followed.

Research Design

This study was performed using the intercourse screening model, which is one of the general screening models within the scope of the quantitative research method. Survey research is a research model that allows the description of tendencies and attitudes based on the determined sample (Creswell, 2017). Relational survey design is the revealing of the relationship between two quantitative variables on the basis of a correlation coefficient (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Relational survey research is a quantitative research design that aims to examine the relationship between the examined characteristics of the sample group without any intervention (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013).

Population and Sample

The group of this work consists of candidate students who took the Ahi Evran University Faculty of Sports Sciences special talent exam in 2023, the sample consisted of 473 students who participated in the study by random sampling. The sample of the study was determined based on the determination of Arlı and Nazik (2001) that a minimum of 10% sample is taken in descriptive studies.

Data Collection Tools

The "Individual information document" created by scanning the literature was used as a data collection tool, the ten-Item "Athlete Identity Scale" was used to measure the athlete identity of the

candidates, and the "Perceived Stress Scale" was used to determine the stress levels perceived by the candidates.

Athlete Identity Scale

Brewer (1993) The original text of the Athlete Identity Assessment Scale developed by Athlete Identity Assessment Scale is a seven-point Likert-type scale consisting of a total of ten items (1: strongly disagree, 7: strongly agree). A high score on the scale indicates a strong athletic identity. This measure consists of a single dimension to determine athlete identity (I see myself as an athlete). The Turkish adaptation of the measure and the inspection of its psychometric properties were previously conducted by the researcher (Çetinkaya, 2010). Within the scope of the work, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined as 0.86.

Perceived Stress Scale

Within the scope of the study, the "Perceived Stress Scale", improved by Cohen et al., (1983) and transcribed into Turkish by Eskin et al., (2013), were used to determine the perceived stress levels of individuals. In this study, the 4-item short form of the scale was used. The items in the scale are scored as (0) Never, (4) Very Often. The level of stress perceived by the respondent is determined by summing the scores obtained from the items, and a high score indicates a high level of perceived stress (Cohen, et al. 1983). As a result of the currency and credibility work conducted by Eskin et al., (2013), the internal consistency coefficient of the short form of the scale was determined as 0.66. Within the scope of the study, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined as 0.77.

Collection of Data

The survey forms used in the work were practical to the candidates who took the 2023 Ahi Evran University Faculty of Sports Sciences special talent exam. Before participating in the study, the participants on necessary information were given detailed information about the aims of the research and completion of the data collection instrument. Data collection instrument collected by the researcher was checked and those that were filled in incompletely or incorrectly were excluded from the study. Then, among the data set forms applied to the candidates, the valid and acceptable ones (473) were coded and transferred to the electronic environment for evaluation.

Analysis of Data

The test of the data collected checked out the statistical software package for analysis Spss 20.0. As a result of examining the kurtosis and skewness values to determine the tests to be used in the analysis of the data, it was observed that it provided the accepted ± 2 range for the assumption of normality (George and Mallery, 2019). Sim and Wright (2002) state that parametric and non-

parametric statistics can be used in small groups ($n < 30$), but the assumptions of parametric statistics must be met. In our study, the tests were decided upon considering the strengths of parametric tests, since the data were continuous variables, had a normal distribution, the sample group was selected randomly, and the homogeneity of variances was ensured. In evaluating the data, distribution, frequency, t-test, Anova test, dispersion test and simple correlation analysis were performed. In the tests, data analysis was performed; The principle of equality of dispersions, which is one of the assumptions of parametric tests were used out of necessity, and if the dispersions were not equal, no difference was observed between the participation in terms of significance grade, even if the p-value was less than the significance grade. The significance degree in the analyses was defined as $\alpha = 0.05$.

Findings

Table 1

Density And Ratio Dispensation of Demographic Information of Work Group

Variables	Sub-Variables	F	%
Gender	Woman	198	41,9
	Men	275	58,1
Age	17-21	432	91,3
	22-25	31	6,6
	26-29	6	1,3
	Over 30	4	,8
	Yes	235	49,7
Licence	No	238	50,3
	Bad	41	8,7
Economic Situation	Middle	379	80,1
	Good	53	11,2
	I Have No Hope At All	8	1,7
Career Hope	I'm Hopeless	28	5,9
	I am Hopeful	265	56,0
	I Am Very Hopeful	172	36,4

275 of our group participating in the research are male and 198 are female. Among the participants, 91.3% of the participants are between the ages of 17-21, with 432 people. Among the participants, 235 people are licensed to do sports, and 238 people are not licensed. 379 of the participants expressed their economic status as 'medium level'. Regarding career hope, the participants who expressed their hope were 265 participants who gave the most answers in the research group.

Table 2

T Test Results for Comparing the Participants' Athlete Identity and Perceived Stress Total Scores According to Gender Variable

Scale	Gender	n	x	ss	t	p
Athletic Identity	Men	275	5,5418	1,30466	1,642	,101
	Women	198	5,3394	1,33491		

Perceived Stress	Men	275	2,7282	,75332	1,822	,069
	Women	198	2,5884	,87027		

When the athletes' identity and perceived stress total scores of the participants are examined according to the gender variable, there is no significant difference. For the athlete identity scale, the average for men is 5.54, while the average for women is 5.33. For the perceived stress scale, the average for men is 2.72, while the average for women is 2.58.

Table 3

ANOVA Results Comparing the Total Scores of Participants' Athlete Identity and Perceived Stress According to Age Variable

Scale	Age	n	x	ss	f	p	Significant Difference
Athletic Identity	17-21	432	5,4831	1,32877	1,208	,306	----
	22-25	31	5,3323	1,21693			
	26-29	6	4,8000	,39497			
	Over 30	4	4,6000	1,79444			
Perceived Stress	17-21	432	2,6510	,81756	1,192	,312	----
	22-25	31	2,7984	,70539			
	26-29	6	3,0417	,24580			
	Over 30	4	3,1250	,66144			

When the participants' athlete identity and perceived stress total scores are examined according to age variable, there is no significant difference.

Table 4

T-Test Results for Comparing the Participants' Athlete Identity and Perceived Stress Total Scores According to The Undergraduate Variable

Scale	Licence	n	x	ss	t	p
Athletic Identity	Yes	235	5,6391	1,36657	3,005	,003
	No	238	5,2773	1,24893		
Perceived Stress	Yes	235	2,6479	,86120	-,583	,560
	No	238	2,6912	,74962		

When the participants' athlete identity and perceived stress total scores were examined according to the undergraduate variable, a significant difference was observed in favor of the licensed participants in the athlete identity scale. While the average of licensed participants is 5.63, the average of non-licensed participants is 5.27. No statistically significant difference was found between the groups in terms of the stress scale.

Table 5

ANOVA Test Conclusion for Comparing the Participants' Athlete Identity and Perceived Stress Total Scores According to The Economic Status Variable

Scale	Economic Situation	n	x	ss	f	p	Significant Difference
Athletic Identity	Bad	41	5,4756	,31601	,868	,420	----
	Middle	379	5,4865	,06153			
	Good	53	5,2321	,20252			
Perceived Stress	Bad	41	2,6951	,11827	,053	,948	----
	Middle	379	2,6708	,04082			
	Good	53	2,6415	,12805			

When the participants' athlete identity and perceived stress total scores were examined according to the economic status variable, no significant difference was observed between the groups in both scales.

Table 6

ANOVA Test Conclusion for Comparing the Total Point of Participants' Athlete Identity and Perceived Stress According to The Variable Of Career Hope

Scale	Career Hope	N	X	Ss	F	P	Significant Difference
Athletic Identity	1. I Have No Hope At All	8	4,1625	,64224	9,756	,000	1-4,2-4,3-4
	2.I'm Hopeless	28	4,8429	,21915			
	3.I'm Hopeful	265	5,3370	,08222			
	4.I Am Very Hopeful	172	5,8023	,09061			
Perceived Stress	1.I Have No Hope At All	8	2,9688	,21359	1,168	,321	----
	2.I'm Hopeless	28	2,8304	,10762			
	3.I'm Hopeful	265	2,6868	,04613			
	4.I Am Very Hopeful	172	2,6032	,07009			

When the participants' athlete identity and perceived stress total scores were examined according to the career hope variable, a significant difference was found in the athlete identity scale, but no significant difference was found in the perceived stress scale. It was observed that the difference between the groups in the athlete identity scale was between the very hopeful group and all other groups.

Table 7

Results Of Correlation Test Conducted to Determine the Relationship Between Participants' Athlete Identity and Perceived Stress Total Scores

	Athletic Identity	Perceived Stress
Athletic Identity	1	
Perceived Stress	-,257**	1

As a result of the simple correlation analysis, it was found that the participants had a low negative and significant relationship with their Athlete identity and Perceived stress scores. ($r = -.257$, $p < 0.01$).

Discussion and Conclusion

In this section of the research, evidence regarding the relationship between participants' athlete identity and perceived stress levels with various variables are included, and the relationships of these parameters in terms of gender, age, undergraduate degree, economic status and career hope variables are discussed.

According to work findings, there is significant no difference when the athlete identity of the our group is examined in terms of gender variable. For the athlete identity scale, the average for men is 5.54, while the average for women is 5.33. When the relevant literature is examined, different findings are found in many studies in terms of athlete identity and gender variables. While some studies point to significant findings in favor of male athletes between athlete identity and gender (Brewer et al., 1993; Weichman and Williams, 1997;), some studies did not report any relationship between these two variables (Çetinkaya, 2019; Good et al., 1993; Lantz and Schroeder, 1999). When the participants' perceived stress scores are examined in terms of gender variable, there is no significant difference. While the average for men is 2.72, the average for women is 2.58. There are studies in the literature that support and oppose our study. Bayram et al., (2016), who reached similar results to our study, reported that the stress levels of the participants in their study did not differ significantly between men and women. Again, Yakamoz (2021) states that in his study, the scores of the research group did not differ in terms of the gender variable. According to our findings, the lack of difference in terms of gender variable may be due to the sample group. Studies conducted on different sample groups may bring different findings.

According to the road map that the research has shown us, there is no significant difference when the athlete identity of the participants is examined in terms of age variable. Çetinkaya (2015) reached similar findings to our study in his studies. The author reports that participants' athlete identity scores did not differ significantly according to their age. In their research, Wiechman and Williams (1997) reached results that support our findings. The authors predicted that there may be a positive relationship between the ages of college students and their athlete identity, but pointed out that this relationship may decrease in the later years of the school year. When the perceived stress scores of the participants are examined in terms of age variable, there is no significant difference. Serdar and Demirel (2020) report in their study that there is no significant difference in the perceived stress scores of the participants, supporting our findings. Again, the results of the study conducted by

You et al. (2020) are parallel to the results of our study. The fact that our research findings reached these results may be related to the similar age range of the sample group. Anxiety about the future increases with age. Especially today's youth are faced with a reality such as unemployment. Therefore, it can be thought that individuals who have reached the age of acquiring a profession may be exposed to more stress.

When the athletes' identity scores of the work group are examined with regard to the undergraduate variable, a significant difference is observed. While the average of licensed participants is 5.63, it is 5.27 for non-licensed participants. Çetinkaya (2015) focused on athlete identity and license periods in his study. In his study on athlete identity and license periods, the author not say that there is not statistically significant difference between the athlete identity scores of the participants in terms of their license periods. In his study, Oregon (2010) did not find any significant difference between the duration of athletics during school years and athlete identity. There was no significant difference in the perceived stress scores of the participants in terms of the undergraduate variable. Kalkavan and Ayyıldız (2021) examined perceived stress scores in terms of sport type in their study. The authors report that athletes competing in individual sports have higher scores than athletes competing in team sports.

When the athletes' identity scores of the work group are examined with regard to the economic status variable, there is no significant difference. Doğaner et al. (2020) report in their study that when the scores were examined, no difference was detected between the groups in the participants' athlete identity and sub-dimensions. The results of this study are parallel to our study. It was observed that the perceived stress point of the work group did not differ with regard to the economic situation variable. Aydın et al. (2022) state in their study that the economic status of the participants is not a significant predictor of their perceived stress. Özgan et al. (2008) also report in their work that there is no significant difference between the income status and stress of the participants. Contrary to our research findings, Bilgel et al. (2007) stated in their study that the depression and stress degree of students who to express that their family's pecuniary status was poor or moderate were higher than those who to express that their family's pecuniary status was good.

When the athletes' identity scores of the participants was evaluated in terms of career hope variable, a significant difference was detected. It was observed that as the participants' career hopes increased, their average athlete identity scores also increased. A significant difference was observed between the participants who were very hopeful and all other groups. When the participants' perceived stress scores in terms of the job hope variable are examined, there is no significant difference.

Another finding we obtained as a result of the research is that the relationship between the participants' athlete identity and perceived stress is low-level negative and significant. Therefore, this correlation indicates that both variables affect each other negatively. It seems important to keep the stress environment away from individuals as much as possible in order to form and maintain a strong sports identity. It is thought that managing stress in a controllable way can help performance in sports to reach even higher scores.

Ethics Committee Permission Information

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Statement of Researchers' Contribution Rates

All stages of the research were carried out by a single author.

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