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Examining Awareness Levels of Team Athletes Regarding Digital Game Addiction

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the awareness levels of team athletes regarding digital game addiction. A total of 231 athletes participated in the study, comprising 105 female athletes and 126 male athletes. To collect data, a demographic information form created by the researcher and an awareness scale regarding digital game addiction were used to assess the athletes' awareness levels. The data were analyzed using the SPSS 26 software package. Descriptive statistics and normality tests were utilized. For normally distributed data, parametric tests such as the "T-test" and "Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)" test, along with the Tukey test, were employed. Data evaluation was interpreted at a significance level of .05. The analysis revealed no significant differences among the athletes based on gender, age, sports experience, type of sport, and frequency of digital game play. As a result, it was determined that team athletes have a high level of awareness regarding digital game addiction. In today's world, the extensive use of technology has brought many positive and negative dimensions to our lives. The most important point to consider during this process is the controlled use of technology and minimizing its harmful effects.

Keywords: Team Sports, Digital Games, Addiction, Awareness

Özet

Takım Sporcularının Dijital Oyun Bağımlılığına İlişkin Farkındalık Düzeylerinin İncelenmesi

Bu araştırmanın amacı takım sporcularının dijital oyun bağımlılığına ilişkin farkındalık düzeylerinin incelenmesidir. Araştırmaya toplam 231 sporcu katılmıştır. Bu sporcuların 105'ini kadın sporcu ve 126'sını erkek sporcu oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada kullanılacak verileri toplamak için araştırmacı tarafından oluşturulan demografik bilgi formu ve sporcuların farkındalık düzeyini belirlemek için dijital oyun bağımlılığına ilişkin farkındalık ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Veriler SPSS 26 paket programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Betimsel istatistikten ve normallik testinden yararlanılmıştır. Normal dağılan verilerde parametrik testlerden "T-testi" ve "Varyans Analizi (ANOVA)" testi ile Tukey testi kullanılmıştır. Veri değerlendirmesi ,05 anlamlılık düzeyine göre yorumlanmıştır. Çalışmada yapılan analiz sonucunda sporcuların cinsiyet, yaş, spor yaşı, spor türü ve dijital oyun oynama sıklığı değişkenlerinde anlamlı farklılık olmadığı görülmüştür. Sonuç olarak takım sporcularının dijital oyun bağımlılığı farkındalık düzeylerinin incelenmesinde takım sporcularının dijital oyun bağımlılık farkındalık düzeylerinin yüksek olduğu çalışmamız sonucunda tespit edilmiştir. Günümüzde teknolojinin çok fazla kullanılması hayatımıza olumlu ve olumsuz birçok yeni boyut kazandırmıştır. Bu süreçte dikkat edilmesi ve göz

önünde bulundurulması gereken en önemli nokta teknolojinin kontrollü kullanılması ve zararlı olan etkilerinin en aza indirilmesidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Takım Sporları, Dijital Oyun, Bağımlılık, Farkındalık

INTRODUCTION

The history of team sports dates back to ancient times. According to historical sources, polo, known as the oldest team sport, originated in Eastern countries such as Iran, Tibet, and China, and was later played by Turks as well (1). Another ancient team sport, field hockey, was born in Iran and spread to the Nile Valley and ancient Greece. Additionally, the ancient Greeks developed team games from simple ball games such as throwing-catching, dribbling, and wall games, and they popularized a game similar to handball to the extent that they organized tournaments in their country. A game similar to football was also played by the Chinese and Turks (2), and historical sources indicate that Turkish khans tried to predict the outcome of battles by playing football matches before going to war. It was believed that if the team favored by the match referee won, the war would be won, and if they lost, the war would be lost (2).

From the early 20th century, Turks became increasingly involved in team sports. In 1905, the first Turkish football club, Galatasaray, was founded, followed by Fenerbahçe in 1907 and others. During the occupation years in Istanbul, various football tournaments were organized, and clubs and teams for sports like ice hockey, field hockey, cricket, baseball, and rugby, which were previously uncommon, were formed and managed by Turkish citizens (3). In the following years, while other sports did not maintain their popularity apart from football, volleyball, basketball, handball, and water polo began to gain prominence. Today, team sports attract crowds and are very popular in Turkey as well as in many countries around the world (1).

The literature shows that there are various classifications of sports branches. At the top of these classifications are team sports and individual sports. Team sports include football, volleyball, basketball, and handball, while individual sports include swimming, athletics, taekwondo, karate, and wrestling, which are significant in performance (4). Historically, people have been physically engaged in these sports and closely followed competitions, but today it is observed that the traditional game concept is gradually losing ground to digital games, which affect individuals of all ages in various forms. The advancing technology of our time has reshaped and transformed many aspects of human life. These changes also apply to the concept of play, which has evolved from traditional games to digital ones (5).

A digital game is a software that allows one or more individuals to interact psychomotorically in a visual environment, engaging in competition with artificial intelligence through digital platforms (6). Initially, digital games seem to be controllable by individuals, but over time, they have begun to influence every age group, resulting in a loss of control for children and young people. Subsequently, several problems arise, one of which is digital game addiction. Addiction is characterized by the loss of control over an object or behavior, leading individuals to feel unable to continue their lives without it. The individual's will disappears, and behaviors continue independently of their intentions (7). Digital game addiction is a behavioral addiction that makes it difficult for individuals to maintain their daily lives and causes harm to them (8).

The purpose of this research is to analyze team sport athletes' awareness levels of digital games across various variables and to propose solutions to the identified issues based on the findings.

METHOD

Research Model

This study is designed to assess team athletes' awareness of digital game addiction and to explore potential significant differences in awareness based on variables such as age, gender, type of sport, years of participation, and frequency of playing digital games, utilizing a survey model. The survey model serves as a research method aimed at accurately depicting an existing situation, whether past or present (9).

Research Group

The study included 105 female and 126 male licensed athletes voluntarily participating from teams in team sports (football, volleyball, basketball, handball), resulting in a total of 231 participants.

Data Collection Tools

Data collection involved a demographic information form created by the researcher and the "Digital Game Addiction Awareness Scale (DOBİFÖ)" developed by (10), which were utilized to assess team athletes' awareness levels of digital game addiction across different demographic variables.

Demographic Information Form

This form was developed by the researcher to identify the data and demographic information (gender, age, type of sport, years of participation in sport, and frequency of playing digital games) to be used in the study.

Digital Game Addiction Awareness Scale

The Digital Game Addiction Awareness Scale (DOBİFÖ), developed by (10), is designed to assess awareness levels concerning digital game addiction. Comprising 12 items divided into two factors—internal awareness (5 items) and external awareness (7 items)—the scale evaluates an individual's understanding of digital game addiction and its internal and external impacts. Responses are measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5).

Data Analysis

Before conducting statistical analyses, it is essential to verify assumptions such as normality, homogeneity, stationarity, and linearity, providing statistical information about which of these assumptions are satisfied. The researcher should justify the choice of analytical techniques based on this assessment, clearly indicating which methods were used and which were excluded (11).

In this study, prior to analyzing the data obtained from the scale, preliminary data processing was undertaken. The demographic information forms completed by the athletes and the "Digital Game Addiction Awareness Scale (DOBİFÖ)" were meticulously reviewed. The relevant data were then transferred to a computer for analysis, using the SPSS 26.0 software package. Initial data analysis employed descriptive techniques such as frequency, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and percentage distribution. For data that met the normality assumption, parametric tests were applied; specifically, the “Independent Samples T-test” was used to assess differences between the sub-dimensions of the Digital Game Addiction Awareness Scale with two independent variables, while the “One-Way ANOVA” test was utilized for more than two independent variables. In cases where statistically significant results were found, post-hoc analyses were conducted using the Tukey test to determine the sources of these differences, with the significance level set at $p < 0.05$.

Ethical approval and institutional permission

Approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Bayburt University (date: 30.04.2024, no: 201083) to conduct the research, confirming that the study is in accordance with ethical guidelines.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Results of the Reliability Distribution of the Digital Game Addiction Awareness Scale (General)

Scale and Sub-Dimensions	Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient	Number of Questions
Digital Game Addiction Awareness Scale (DOBİFÖ)	0,912	12
Internal Awareness	0,886	5
External Awareness	0,884	7

According to the reliability distribution results of the Digital Game Addiction Awareness Scale used in our study, the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient for the DOBİFÖ was found to be 0.912, with the internal awareness sub-dimension at 0.886 and the external awareness sub-dimension at 0.884. Since these values fall within the range of $0.80 < R2 < 1.00$, it has been determined that the scale has high reliability (12,13).

Table 2. Demographic Distributions of Athletes in the Study

Variables		N	%
Gender	Woman	105	45,5
	Man	126	54,5
Age	18-22 Years	175	75,8
	23 Years and Above	56	24,2
Sports Age	1-3 age	42	18,2
	4-6 age	81	35,0
	7 age and above	108	46,8
Sports Type	Football	86	37,2
	Handball	28	12,1
	Volleyball	88	38,1
	Basketball	29	12,6
Frequency of Playing Digital Games	Sometimes	41	17,7
	Rarely	90	39,0
	Very Often	62	26,8
	Never	38	16,5

The research was conducted on a total of 231 team athletes, including 105 women and 126 men. Among the athletes who participated in the study, 175 were in the age range of 18-22, while 56 were aged 23 and above. In terms of years of participation in sports, 42 athletes had 1-3 years, 81 had 4-6 years, and 108 had 7 years or more. It was found that 86 athletes were involved in football, 28 in handball, 88 in volleyball, and 29 in basketball. Regarding the frequency of playing digital games, 41 athletes reported playing occasionally, 90 rarely, 62 very frequently, and 38 never.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Distribution

	DÖBİFÖ	Internal Awareness	External Awareness
N	231	231	231
Mean	3,551	3,369	3,680
Median	3,666	3,600	3,857
Standard Deviation	0,844	1,025	0,877
Skewness	**-0,524**	**-0,584**	**-0,884**
Standard Error of Skewness	0,160	0,160	0,160
Kurtosis	**-0,155**	**-0,146**	**0,713**
Standard Error of Kurtosis	0,319	0,319	0,319

When examining the descriptive data of the Digital Game Addiction Awareness Scale, it was found that the values for kurtosis and skewness were within the range of +1.5 and -1.5. Additionally, the closeness of the mean, mode, and median values was interpreted as an indication that the data exhibited normal distribution, which is considered a normality assumption (14). Based on this, parametric tests were applied in our research.

Table 4. T-test Results of Athletes According to Gender Variable

Scale and Sub-dimensions	Gender	N	Mean±SD	t	p
DOBİFÖ (General)	Woman	105	3,593±0,790	0,696	0,487
	Man	126	3,515±0,888		
Internal Awareness	Woman	105	3,464±0,891	1,288	0,190
	Man	126	3,290±1,122		
External Awareness	Woman	105	3,685±0,850	0,076	0,939
	Man	126	3,676±0,902		
P<0.05					

It has been determined that there is no significant difference at the p<0.05 level based on the findings obtained from the scales and subdimensions used in the study regarding the genders of the athletes

Table 5. T-test Results of Athletes According to Age Variable

Scale and Sub-dimensions	Age	N	Mean±SD	t	p
DOBİFÖ (General)	18-22 Years	175	3,533±0,871	-0,568	0,570
	23 Years and Above	56	3,607±0,758		
Internal Awareness	18-22 Years	175	3,390±1,031	0,553	0,581
	23 Years and Above	56	3,303±1,014		
External Awareness	18-22 Years	175	3,635±0,923	-1,617	0,109
	23 Years and Above	56	3,824±0,700		
P<0.05					

In the study, it was determined that there was no significant difference at the p<0.05 level between the age ranges of the athletes and the scale and its sub-dimensions.

Table 6. Comparison of Scale Sub-Dimensions According to Sports Age (One-Way ANOVA - Tukey)

Scale and Sub-dimensions	Sports Age	N	Mean±SD	f	p	Tukey
DOBİFÖ (General)	1-3 age	42	3,575±0,856	0,416	0,660	-
	4-6 age	81	3,609±0,677			
	7 age and above	108	3,498±0,950			
Internal Awareness	1-3 age	42	3,552±1,081	1,026	0,360	-
	4-6 age	81	3,385±0,848			
	7 age and above	108	3,287±1,119			
External Awareness	1-3 age	42	3,591±0,801	0,692	0,502	-
	4-6 age	81	3,769±0,698			
	7 age and above	108	3,649±1,016			
P<0.05						

After conducting the variance analysis to examine the relationship between athletes' sports age and the scale, including its sub-dimensions, the results indicated that there was no significant difference at the p<0.05 level.

Table 7. Comparison of Scale Sub-Dimensions According to Sport Type (One-Way ANOVA - Tukey)

Scale and Sub-dimensions	Sports Type	N	Mean±SD	f	p	Tukey
DOBİFÖ (General)	Football	86	3,493±0,857	1,047	0,373	-
	Handball	28	3,434±0,842			
	Volleyball	88	3,569±0,822			
	Basketball	29	3,781±0,872			
Internal Awareness	Football	86	3,332±1,049	0,824	0,482	-
	Handball	28	3,357±1,144			
	Volleyball	88	3,318±0,937			
	Basketball	29	3,648±1,101			
External Awareness	Football	86	3,608±0,915	1,302	0,275	-
	Handball	28	3,489±0,817			
	Volleyball	88	3,748±0,877			
	Basketball	29	3,876±0,796			
P<0.05						

Upon conducting the variance analysis to evaluate the athletes' sport type in relation to the scale and its sub-dimensions, it was determined that no significant difference was present at the p<0.05 level.

Table 8. Comparison of Scale Sub-Dimensions Based on Digital Game Playing Frequency (One-Way ANOVA - Tukey)

Scale and Sub-dimensions	Frequency of Playing Digital Games	N	Mean±SD	f	p	Tukey
DOBİFÖ (General)	Sometimes	41	3,611±0,648	0,589	0,623	-
	Rarely	90	3,617±0,844			
	Very Often	62	3,461±0,932			
	Never	38	3,475±0,891			
Internal Awareness	Sometimes	41	3,268±0,853	0,189	0,904	-
	Rarely	90	3,411±0,920			
	Very Often	62	3,361±1,166			
	Never	38	3,394±1,205			
External Awareness	Sometimes	41	3,857±0,679	1,796	0,149	-
	Rarely	90	3,765±0,890			
	Very Often	62	3,532±0,930			
	Never	38	3,533±0,916			
P<0.05						

After conducting the variance analysis test to compare the frequency of playing digital games with the scale and its sub-dimensions used in the study, it was determined that there was no significant difference at the $p<0.05$ level.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research aims to investigate team athletes' awareness levels regarding digital game addiction. A total of 231 team athletes participated, consisting of 105 women and 126 men. Among the participants, 175 were aged 18-22, while 56 were 23 years or older. In terms of sports experience, 42 athletes had 1-3 years, 81 had 4-6 years, and 108 had 7 years or more. In relation to the sports they played, 86 athletes participated in football, 28 in handball, 88 in volleyball, and 29 in basketball. As for the frequency of playing digital games, it was found that 41 athletes played occasionally, 90 rarely, 62 very frequently, and 38 not at all.

As a result of our study, we found no significant differences between gender and the scale or its sub-dimensions. In related literature, (15) conducted research titled "Examination of Middle School Students' Levels of Digital Game Addiction According to Various Variables (Sample from Niğde Province)" with 352 students, revealing statistically significant differences concerning gender. Conversely, (16), in their study with 181 athletes, reported no significant differences between gender and the sub-dimensions of the scale. (17) included 134 children in his study, "Examination of Digital Game Addiction in Children from Various Perspectives," concluding that gender did not affect levels of digital game addiction. (18) studied 248 students and found that male students had higher levels of digital game addiction compared to their female counterparts. (19), in their research titled "Digital Game Addiction and Aggression in Middle School Students," involved 279 middle school students and concluded that these students were at risk for digital game addiction and exhibited aggressive behaviors, with significant differences noted in both the aggression and digital game addiction scales. (20) investigated 583 adolescents in their study on "Factors Affecting Digital Game Addiction and Physical Activity Attitudes and Behaviors in Adolescents," finding that digital game addiction levels varied by gender. In contrast, (21) examined the link between motivation for physical activity and motivation for playing digital games, finding no gender differences. Lastly, (22) discovered that boys had a higher addiction to online games than girls in his study on the relationship between online game addiction and aggressive behaviors in children and adolescents, which may be attributed to the fact that much of the game content is targeted towards males. This situation suggests that digital game addiction may vary depending on gender and that factors such as the sample group, age range, participation in sports, and game types may influence these results. The absence of gender differences in the sample of team athletes can be explained by the discipline-building and time management-supporting effects of sports.

As a result of our study, no significant differences were found between age and the scale or its sub-dimensions. Reviewing the literature on age-related studies, (15) conducted research titled "Examination of Middle School Students' Levels of Digital Game Addiction According to Various Variables (Sample from Niğde Province)" with 352 students. Their results indicated statistically significant differences related to the

age variable among participants, and a positive significant relationship was found between age and digital game addiction scores. In the study by (16), which included 181 athletes, significant differences were identified between age and the psychological-physiological effects of deprivation, as well as the immersion sub-dimension. (17) included 134 children in his research titled "Examination of Digital Game Addiction in Children from Various Perspectives," concluding that age significantly influenced children's levels of digital game addiction. Additionally, (18) investigated the levels of digital game addiction among sedentary and active students, finding that individuals aged 18-21 exhibited higher levels of digital game addiction compared to other age groups. The literature indicates that levels of digital game addiction are higher among younger age groups. However, the absence of an age-related difference in the current study, the fact that a large portion of the sample was in a similar age range, and their active involvement in sports suggest that age may be a limiting factor.

In our study, no significant differences were found between sports experience and the scale or its sub-dimensions. Reviewing the literature on sports experience, (15) conducted a study titled "Examination of Middle School Students' Levels of Digital Game Addiction According to Various Variables (Sample from Niğde Province)" with 352 students. Their statistical analyses concerning the variable of holding a sports license revealed no significant differences between groups. In contrast, (16), in their study involving 181 athletes, found a significant difference between the number of years in sports and the development of tolerance in gameplay, as well as the value assigned to the game sub-dimension. (18) examined the levels of digital game addiction among 248 students, concluding that there was no significant difference in digital game addiction levels based on sports engagement. Meanwhile, in the research by (19), which involved 279 middle school students examining digital game addiction and aggression, significant statistical differences were identified in both the aggression scale and the digital game addiction scale based on participation in sports. This difference suggests that the nature of the sport, training intensity, and the meaning the individual attaches to the sport may be more decisive factors in digital game behavior than the duration of the sport. The fact that the age of participation in sports was not a significant factor in the current study can be explained by the fact that team sports instill regular training and a sense of responsibility.

As a result of our study, no significant differences were found between the type of sport and the scale or its sub-dimensions. In reviewing the literature on this topic, (15) conducted research titled "Examination of Middle School Students' Levels of Digital Game Addiction According to Various Variables (Sample from Niğde Province)" with 352 students. Their findings indicated statistically significant differences related to the type of game played by participants. In contrast, the study by (16), which included 181 athletes, found no significant differences in the sub-dimensions of the scale concerning the type of sport variable. (17) included 134 children in his research titled "Examination of Digital Game Addiction in Children from Various Perspectives," concluding that the type of digital game did not influence children's levels of digital game addiction. In the study by (18), which examined the levels of digital game addiction among 248 sedentary and active students, it was determined that there were no significant differences in digital game addiction levels based on the type of sport. Additionally, (20) included 583 adolescents in their study on "Factors Affecting Digital Game Addiction and Physical Activity Attitudes and Behaviors in Adolescents," which found that levels of digital game addiction varied depending on whether the children participated in any sports. The absence of differences between sports in the current study can be explained by the fact that team sports share common characteristics, similar training disciplines, and social interaction. This situation indicates that individual habits and technological usage behaviors are more decisive than the sport itself in terms of digital game addiction.

As a result of our study, no significant difference was found between the frequency of playing digital games and the scale and its sub-dimensions. In reviewing the literature on the frequency of playing digital games, (16) included 181 athletes in their study on "Examination of Digital Game Addiction Among Students in Regional Sports Centers." The results indicated that significant differences were found between the duration of gameplay and the sub-dimensions related to tolerance development and the value assigned to the game. The study concluded that participants were affected by the duration of their gameplay. In the research by (18), conducted on 248 students, it was found that participants who used the internet for more than 6 hours had higher levels of addiction compared to others. In the study by (19), which included 279 middle school students examining digital game addiction and aggression, significant statistical differences were observed in both the

aggression scale and the digital game addiction scale based on the duration of gameplay. (20) found that the levels of digital game addiction among children varied based on whether they constantly played a particular game and their device usage times. In studies conducted by (23) on the risk factors of digital game addiction, and (24) on online game addiction and treatments in adolescents, the existence of digital game addiction was acknowledged, and its effects were demonstrated. (25) concluded in their studies on computer game addiction and abuse among adolescents that excessive gameplay duration affected addiction. The study found no significant difference between the frequency of digital game playing and the digital game addiction scale and its subscales. This finding differs from many studies in the literature that reveal significant relationships between gaming duration and addiction levels (16,18,19). This suggests that individuals' psychological attachment to the game, their motivation, and the game content may be more influential on addiction than the frequency of gaming. Furthermore, athletes' regular physical activity may have contributed to balancing the time they spent on digital games.

In conclusion, our study aimed to examine the awareness levels of team athletes regarding digital game addiction, and the analysis results showed no significant differences among the variables used in the study. The extensive use of technology today has introduced many new positive and negative dimensions to our lives. The most important point to consider during this process is the controlled use of technology and minimizing its harmful effects. In our age, advancements in computer technologies have become more realistic, which attracts individuals' interest even more. As a result, individuals have shifted from spending time outdoors to engaging in computer games. Families, in particular, need to be vigilant about digital addiction, as these addictions can lead to increased stress and anxiety levels, negative interpersonal relationships, irritability, and aggressive thoughts. In this regard, families, coaches, and sports trainers have important roles to play. Families should enhance their digital literacy levels, the topic of digital game addiction should be included in training and sports education, and athletes should be made aware of this issue. Individuals should be directed towards physical activities instead of digital games. Therefore, our study will shed light on future research and can contribute to the scientific community by including studies that evaluate the effects of digital game addiction across different sports disciplines

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