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Team Identification Level Among University Student Sports Fans: Its Relationship with Self-Esteem, Anger Level, and Anger Expression Styles

Spor Taraftarı Olan Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Takımla Özdeşleşme Düzeyinin Benlik Saygısı, Öfke Düzeyi ve Tarzı ile İlişkisi

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Objective: This study aimed to investigate how team identification among university students who follow sports is associated with self-esteem, anger level, and anger expression style, emphasizing potential implications for mental health.

Materials and Methods: A total of 573 students participated, all of whom reported regular involvement in sports-related activities. Data were gathered using standardized self-report instruments that measured team identification, self-esteem, and anger patterns. A cross-sectional design was adopted, and the resulting data were evaluated through relevant statistical analyses.

Results: The findings indicated that higher levels of team identification were linked to stronger outward anger expression and elevated anger levels. Notably, male students and those whose parents had lower educational backgrounds tended to demonstrate higher team identification. However, no significant relationship emerged between team identification and self-esteem, suggesting that intense allegiance to a sports team may not necessarily influence personal self-regard.

Conclusion: The results highlight the importance of recognizing team identification as a factor that can affect emotional balance and anger-related behaviors among sports-oriented university students. By considering these connections in academic and clinical settings, strategies for enhancing mental well-being and mitigating potential adverse outcomes—such as heightened anger responses—may be more effectively developed and implemented.

Keywords: Team Identification, Self-Esteem, Anger Level, Anger Expression Style, Sports Psychiatry

Amaç: Bu çalışmada, spor taraftarı olduklarını belirten üniversite öğrencilerinin takımla özdeşleşme (TÖ) düzeyleri ile benlik saygısı ve öfke ifade tarzları arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

Gereç ve Yöntem: Çalışmaya toplam 573 üniversite öğrencisi katılmıştır. Katılımcıların TÖ düzeylerini belirlemek için Spor Taraftarı Özdeşleşme Ölçeği (STÖÖ), benlik saygısını ölçmek için Rosenberg Benlik Saygısı Ölçeği (RBSÖ) ve öfke özelliklerini değerlendirmek için Süreksiz-Sürekli Öfke ve Öfke İfade Tarzı Ölçeği (STÖ) kullanılmıştır. Araştırma kesitsel bir desenle yürütülmüş ve veriler istatistiksel analizler yoluyla incelenmiştir.

Bulgular: Bulgular, TÖ düzeyinin cinsiyet ve ebeveyn eğitim durumu gibi faktörlere göre anlamlı farklılık gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Özellikle erkek öğrenciler ile ebeveyn eğitim düzeyi daha düşük olan gruplarda TÖ'nün daha yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Spor aktivitelerine daha sık katılan öğrencilerde de TÖ düzeyinin arttığı tespit edilmiştir. TÖ ile öfke dışı vurumu ve sürekli öfke arasında pozitif bir ilişki belirlenmiş; bu durum, takımla özdeşleşme düzeyi yüksek olan taraftarların öfkeyi daha yoğun deneyimleme ve ifade etme eğiliminde olduğunu göstermektedir. Buna karşın, TÖ ile benlik saygısı arasında anlamlı bir ilişki saptanamamıştır.

Sonuç: Elde edilen bulgular, takımla özdeşleşmenin özellikle öfke yönetimi ve duygusal düzenleme üzerinde önemli etkileri olduğunu göstermektedir. Spor ortamlarında ortaya çıkan agresyonun önlenmesinde, takımla özdeşleşme düzeylerinin ve öfke ifade biçimlerinin dikkate alınması gerekebileceği düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Takımla Özdeşleşme, Benlik Saygısı, Öfke İfade Tarzları, Spor Taraftarı Davranışı, Spor Psikiyatrisi

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular pastimes in modern culture is watching athletic events. A significant portion of society engages with sports, from casual viewership to dedicated fandom. Numerous previous research studies have examined the psychological aspects of sports fandom, attempting to distinguish between fans and spectators. While a spectator of sport is someone who watches sport in person or via different media channels, a fan is someone with a particular interest in one (or more) sporting team(s) or athletes who has positive feelings for them and pledges their support to them (Arslanoğlu, 2005). The degree to which an individual identifies with the team is what makes the difference.

Identification, the process of assimilating the characteristics, emotions, behaviors, values, and beliefs of another individual into one's own identity, serves as a subconscious maturation and defense mechanism employed by individuals from childhood through adulthood. The significant identifications established by an individual enhance their self-esteem (Erikson, 1994).

Team identification (TI), defining the psychological bond between a fan and their preferred team or athlete, is crucial for the self-representation of a sports enthusiast—an individual with a profound identification perceives their favored team/player as an extension of their identity. Their role as supporters is integral to their self-perception, leading them to regard themselves as superior to the fans of other clubs or players (Wann, 1997). TI underpins an individual's affiliation with a community where engagement holds a psychological value. In this regard, TI can be considered as a manifestation of one's social identity. Strong team identification can help fans feel more a part of a wider social circle, which can boost their self-esteem (Wann, 2006). Research indicates a correlation between strong team identification and self-esteem (Smith, 1988; Wann, 1994). Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory states that people

are driven to preserve a positive identity and enhance their self-esteem (Hanrahan and Gallois, 1993).

Highly identified fans perceive their team as an integral part of their identity, contributing to their sense of belonging and collective self-worth. TI among sports fans may boost self-esteem, bolstered by a developed sense of belonging and acceptance, which are recognized contributors to self-esteem (Benish-Weisman et al., 2015).

Team identification (TI) among sports fans may boost self-esteem, bolstered by a developed sense of belonging and acceptance, which are recognized contributors to self-esteem (Benish-Weisman et al., 2015). To maintain this social identity, fans with an intense connection to a particular team or player may exhibit heightened reactivity during competitions, with extreme responses anticipated (Günay and Tiryaki, 2003). Additionally, when their team loses, strongly identified supporters experience a sense of loss that, in certain situations, might result in aggressive conduct (Demirel et al., 2007).

While "aggression" is not classified as an independent clinical entity or illness in psychiatry, it frequently manifests as a symptom in numerous psychiatric disorders. Anger is an emotional state that drives an individual to engage in behaviors intended to warn, frighten, or assault individuals they perceive as adversarial or menacing (Kennedy, 1992). Anger can evolve into destructive and aggressive behaviors (Robbins, 2000). After losing, strongly identified fans are more likely to attempt to re-establish their identities by acting hostilely and negatively toward the opposition team's players or supporters, but they are unable to avoid their team in order to regain their confidence (Wann, 1993). Prior research has indicated an association between the level of TI and aggressive conduct (Berkowitz, 1993; Wann, 1993; Wann et al., 1999). Furthermore, research examining the determinants of aggressive conduct and the triggers of aggression among sports enthusiasts in Turkey has indicated that aggression is inversely

correlated with age and educational attainment, and is associated with variables such as the frequency of media engagement with the team, the actions of rival players and referees, and the team's performance (Giray and Gültekin Salman, 2008). Despite the prominence of sport in daily life in Turkey, there is a scarcity of studies examining the psychological dimensions of sports spectatorship. The present study investigates the relationship of TI levels with self-esteem, anger levels, and anger expression styles of sports fans among university students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Procedure

The present study was conducted after being granted the approval of the Celal Bayar University Local Ethics Committee and the permission of the dean's offices of the faculties in which the students were studying before the application. Participants provided written informed consent.

Sample

The universe of the study was all first-year students at the Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. Included in the study were students who i) agreed to participate voluntarily in the study, ii) had the mental and physical capacity to complete the scales, and iii) stated their support of a sports club (or team), while those with any condition that prevented them from carrying out the tasks defined in the study in a healthy way were excluded.

Clinical Evaluation Tools

Sports Spectator Identification Scale

The Sports Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) was developed by Wann and Branscombe in 1993 to distinguish between those who support a sports team as spectators and those who can be considered sports fans and to measure the level of identification of fans with their team. The Cronbach's alpha

internal consistency coefficient of the original scale was 0.91 (Wann and Branscombe, 1993), while the validity and reliability of the Turkish version of the scale carried out by Günay and Tiryaki in 2003 recorded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87, and 0.85 based on the test-retest reliability method (Günay and Tiryaki, 2003). The scale comprises seven Likert-type items that are scored between 1 and 8, while high scores indicate a greater identification with one's team.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1963 (Rosenberg, 2015), while the validity and reliability study of the Turkish version of the scale was performed by Çuhadaroğlu (Çuhadaroğlu, 1986). The "self-esteem subscale" used in the present study comprises 10 items with positive and negative statements arranged according to the Guttman measurement method. Scores of 0–1 indicate high self-esteem, 2–4 indicate moderate self-esteem, and 5–6 indicate low self-esteem.

State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory

The State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI) is a self-assessment tool for the measurement of expressions of anger and emotion. It was developed in 1983 by Spielberger, who analyzed the emotion of anger in two categories, "continuity" and "contingency," and it was adapted to Turkish by Özer (Özer, 1994; Spielberger, 1983). The scale comprises four subscales, including "anger-in," "anger-out," "anger control," and "trait anger," and 34 items. It does not produce an overall score, as the items of each subscale are considered only the total score for that subscale.

Application

The scales were applied to all students who attended classes over 15 minutes before the start of the classes. The administration of the scales was conducted in a face-to-face setting during class hours in a quiet and controlled environment. Participants were given

approximately 10–15 minutes to complete the questionnaires. Statistical evaluations were made only of the data provided by the participants who identified themselves as “sports fans.”

The Sociodemographic Data Form, SSIS, RSES, and STAXI were applied to 573 students who were identified as sports fans among all the students who attended the courses.

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Statistical Analysis

The SPSS for Windows (Version 15.0. Chicago, SPSS Inc.) statistical software package was used for the statistical analysis. The data were first analyzed according to descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, number, percentage distribution, etc.), with a Chi-square test applied to categorical variables and a T-test for independent groups, or an ANOVA (Mann–Whitney U test and Kruskal–Wallis test when normal distribution conditions were not met) for numerical variables. Pearson’s correlation analysis was used to compare scale scores with no cut-off value (or Spearman’s correlation test when parametric conditions were not met).

RESULTS

Sociodemographic and Clinical Characteristics of the Study Group

Included in the study were 113 students from the Faculty of Medicine and 460 students from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. Of the total 573 participants, 296 (51.7%) were male and 277 (48.3%) were female, and the mean age was 18.82 ± 1.275 years. Table 1 presents the sociodemographic and clinical characteristics of the participants. To evaluate the participants’ relationships with sports, they were first asked about any

involvement in a sports branch and whether they held an athlete’s license. The results revealed that 35.6% (i.e., 204 students) took part in regular physical exercise and 24.7% (i.e., 157 students) had a regular training routine in a particular sporting branch. Furthermore, 137 students (23.9%) had an amateur or professional athlete’s license.

Among the participants, 49.0% (281 students) stated that they resorted to verbal violence, such as swearing, from time to time when watching sports competitions, whereas 54 of them (9.4%) stated that they resorted to physical violence, such as getting involved in fights. The average SSIS score of the 573 students included in the study was 33.76, with an SD (standard deviation) of 13.78. Table 2 presents the average SSIS and RSES scores.

Comparison of Sports Spectator Identification Scale and Sociodemographic Data

The mean SSIS score was 38.61, with an SD of 12.81, for the 296 male participants and 28.25, with an SD of 12.88, for the 277 female participants, which demonstrates a statistically significant difference. ($p = 0.000$, $F = 0.52$).

When evaluating the educational levels of the participants’ parents, it was found that students whose fathers had a high school education had a higher average SSIS score compared to the group whose fathers had a university education ($p = 0.007$). The level of identification with a specific team among the students whose fathers were secondary school graduates or below was higher than that among those whose fathers were university graduates, with a p-value close to statistical significance ($p = 0.061$). The level of identification with a team among the students whose mothers were high school graduates and secondary school graduates or below was higher than that among those whose mothers were university graduates ($p = 0.016$, $p = 0.001$).

No significant correlation was found between SSIS scores and variables such as the financial status of the family, the loss of parents during childhood, separation from one’s parents, place of residence, place of childhood, faculty in which they study, history of psychiatric disorder, history of psychiatric disorders in a family member, or history of chronic physical disability.

Table 1. Comparison of Team Identification Scores According to Sociodemographic and Sports-related Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Category	n	Percentage (%)	SSIS	p	t/F/Z
Gender	Female	277	48.3	28.25±12.88	0.000*	t=9.348
	Male	296	51.7	38.61±12.81		
Age	Under 19	290	50.7	32.78±13.9	0.085*	t=-1.726
	19 And Above	283	49.3	34.77±13.51		
Faculty	Medicine	113	19.7	32.95±13.22	0.423***	Z=0.801
	Economics	460	80.3	33.96±13.91		
Financial Situation	Bad+Average	438	80.0	33.18±13.72	0.130*	t=-1.518
	Good	112	20.0	35.38±13.81		
Parental Loss	Yes	38	6.6	32.00±14.27	0.421***	Z=0.805
	No	535	93.4	33.89±13.75		
Parental Separation	Yes	62	10.8	33.51±15.52	0.941***	Z=0.941
	No	511	89.2	33.79±13.57		
location of upbringing	Village+District	280	48.8	32.81±14.13	0.107*	t=-1.613
	City Center	293	51.2	34.67±13.39		
location of residency	Village+District	265	7.3	32.90±14.19	0.169*	t=-1.376
	City Center	308	51.1	34.49±13.39		
Parental Education (Father)	Secondary School and Below (a)	232	40.4	33.17±13.47	0.007** (b>c)	
	High School (b)	186	32.5	36.23±13.23		
	University (c)	155	27.1	31.70±14.52		
Parental Education (Mother)	Secondary School and Below	328	57.2	33.83±13.76	0.001**** (b>c a>c)	
	High School	156	27.2	36.14±13.33		
	University	89	15.5	29.34±13.78		
Psychiatric History	Yes	37	6.5	36.38±13.38	0.23***	Z=1.194
	No	536	93.5	33.58±13.80		
Family Psychiatric History	Yes	45	7.9	34.84±14.67	0.551***	Z=0.548
	No	528	92.1	33.67±13.71		
Physical Disease	Yes	558	97.4	28.00±18.11	0.167***	Z=1.382
	No	15	2.6	33.92±13.63		
Regular Exercise	Yes	204	35.6	38.13±13.41	0.000*	t=5.796
	No	369	64.4	31.35±13.40		
Regular Training	Yes	157	24.7	38.99±12.8	0.000*	t=5.729
	No	416	72.6	31.79±13.62		
Licensed Athlete	Yes	137	23.9	38.68±13.23	0.000*	t=4.882
	No	436	76.1	32.22±13.60		

*Student T test, **One Way ANOVA (posthoc Tukey), ***Man-Whitney U test, ****Kruskal-Wallis test

Note: This table compares SSIS scores based on participants' demographic and clinical characteristics, including gender, age, faculty, financial status, and family background.

The mean scores of the SSIS were higher in participants who practiced sports regularly than in participants who did not, also in participants who regularly trained in a sports branch than who did not, and in participants who had an athlete's license than who did not have an athlete's license ($p = 0.000$). Those who stated

that they resorted to verbal and/or physical violence while watching sporting events had higher average SSIS scores than those who stated that they did not resort to violence ($p = 0.000$) (Table 3). Table 1 presents a comparison of the SSIS scores and the sociodemographic status of the students included in the study.

Table 2. SSIS and STAXI scores of the participants

Scale	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Deviation
Ssis	33.76	7	56	13.78
Trait Anger	22.07	10	40	5.91
State Anger	23.52	11	35	3.58
Anger Control	21.74	8	32	5.20
Anger-Out	16.84	8	32	4.45
Anger-In	17.26	8	32	4.26

Note: This table reports the mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation of SSIS and State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI) scores, covering dimensions such as trait anger, state anger, anger control, anger-out, and anger-in.

Table 3. Comparison of Team Identification Scores According to Participants' Verbal and Physical Aggression Behaviors at Sporting Events

Variable	Category	n	%	SSIS	p	t
Verbal Violence at Sports Events	Yes	281	49.0	40.05±11.98	0.000*	11.982
	No	292	51.0	27.71±12.65		
Physical Violence at Sports Events	Yes	54	9.4	43.30±13.21	0.000*	5.476
	No	519	90.6	32.77±13.47		

***student T test**

Note: The table presents SSIS scores for participants who have and have not attended verbal or physical violence incidents during sports events, with an emphasis on significant differences.

Comparison of Sports Spectator Identification Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

When evaluating the scores of the RSES subscale, among the 364 participants identified with high self-esteem, the average SSIS score was 34.29, with an SD of 13.85. Among the 185 participants identified with moderate self-

esteem, the average SSIS score was 33.24, with an SD of 13.23. Lastly, among the 24 participants identified with low self-esteem, the average SSIS score was 29.87, with an SD of 16.52. No statistically significant correlation was identified between the RSES scores and the SSIS scores.

Table 4. Comparison of the RSES and SSIS scores

RSES	SSIS	sd*	F	p
Low	29,87	16,52	1,353	0,259
Moderate	33,24	13,23		
High	34,29	13,85		

***standart deviation**

Note: This table shows the relationship between self-esteem levels measured by the RSES and team identification levels assessed by the SSIS, including statistical significance and standard deviations.

Table 5. Comparison of the STAXI and SSIS scores

	Trait Anger	State Anger	Anger Control	Anger-Out	Anger-In
SSIS	0,142	-0,016	0,005	0,092	-0,47
p*	0,001	0,707	0,900	0,027	0,257

*** pearson correlation coefficient**

Note: This table displays the correlation analysis between SSIS scores and various STAXI components (e.g., trait anger, state anger, anger control, anger-out, and anger-in), along with p-values indicating statistical significance.

Comparison of Sports Spectator Identification Scale and State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory

When the subscales of the STAXI were compared with the level of identification with the team, as the students' level of identification with their favorite sports team/club increased, their levels of trait anger also increased. This relationship was found to be statistically significant ($p = 0.001$).

A positive correlation was found between the participants' SSIS scores and anger-out subscale scores ($p = 0.027$), while no significant correlation was found between the trait anger, anger-in, and anger control subscale scores. Table 5 presents the comparison of SSIS scores and STAXI scores of the participants.

DISCUSSION

Studies of aggressive behavior patterns among sports fans have reported that sociodemographic components, such as gender, and the psychological processes of the individual may have a synergistic effect. In the present study, it was found that male participants had higher levels of TI than female participants ($p = 0.000$). Studies conducted in Turkey have found that men tend to have higher levels of TI and feelings of team-related belonging than women (Demirel et al., 2007). In the validity and reliability study of the original form of the SSIS, no difference was found between the levels of identification of the female and male students (Wann and Branscombe, 1993), while in the validity and reliability study of the Turkish version of the scale, the identification scores of male sports fans were found to be statistically significantly higher than those of female sports fans (Günay and Tiryaki, 2003). However, there are studies in the literature that have found no significant difference in TI levels between men and women (Wann et al., 1999). These conflicting results may stem from the prevalence of studies conducted abroad, primarily focused on sports fans supporting sports teams affiliated with their educational institutions, and the inclusion of non-male-dominated sports. These factors may contribute to women participants in the

mentioned studies experiencing similar levels of TI and feelings of belonging to the supported team as their male counterparts. Furthermore, the male-dominated societal structure, differences in social lives between men and women, and the perception of football as the predominant sport may explain the influence of gender on fan behavior in studies conducted in Turkey. Research on gender analysis in sports institutions indicates unequal conditions between men and women in accessing resources within the sports environment, highlighting that sports tend to cater to the interests and needs of dominant social groups in society (Bulgu, 2012).

In a study of football fans investigating the relationship between the educational status of the participants and their reasons for not spectating at live matches, it was found that the main reason for not going to live events was ticket prices (43.5%), while the potential for violence at stadiums during matches (31.1%) was the major reason given by those with a bachelor's degree (Agcaoglu et al., 2013). In a study conducted by Özmaden regarding supporters attending football matches in stadiums, the rate of high school graduates was determined as 44.3%, university graduates as 36.9%, and middle school graduates as 9.2% (Özmaden, 2005). These rates are similar to the educational levels of the participants' parents, indicating no significant differences in terms of educational status in our study. In the present study, team identification levels were lower among students whose fathers were university graduates compared to those whose fathers were high school or secondary school graduates. Similarly, the highest level of identification with a team was found among students whose mothers were high school graduates and lowest among the students whose mothers were university graduates. This result may be associated with the significant influence of both individuals' and their parents' educational levels on their sociocultural status, particularly among individuals who are still students. The sociocultural level of individuals who maintain economic ties with their parents due to their ongoing education may not have diverged significantly from their parents.

Individuals who are currently enrolled in university education and who have parents with higher levels of education tend to experience a decrease in their level of team following and identification due to their discomfort with incidents of violence during matches. On the other hand, students from families with lower levels of education may encounter difficulties in engaging in fan behavior due to financial constraints, which could lead to potentially lower levels of identification.

The positive correlation observed between participants' engagement in sports routines and their levels of identification may be attributed to an increased interest and curiosity in sports, along with a higher degree of active participation in sports. Consequently, this can result in an enhanced sense of identification. In a 2015 study, Sivrikaya reported that normal fan behavior was positively correlated with the exercise habits of the individual, whereas fanaticism was negatively correlated with physical activity (Sivrikaya, 2015). A review of many studies in the literature reveals that being a sports fan and identifying with a team can have potential consequences for aggression (Wann and Branscombe, 1990). A strong identification with a team may result in a negative perception of those who support different teams, manifesting even in aggressive behaviors (Feshbach, 1990). According to a survey conducted in the United States, 96% of individuals who participated in sporting events indicated that they had personally been involved in or witnessed an aggressive incident (Iso-Ahola and Hatfield, 1986). In many studies conducted by Branscombe and Wann, sports fans with a high level of identification with their teams are more prone to aggressive behavior than those with lower levels of identification (Branscombe and Wann, 1994; Wann, 1993; Wann et al., 2003). In a study of the level of instrumental and hostile aggression among sports fans, both hostile and instrumental aggression levels were found to be higher among sports fans with a high level of identification with their teams (Wann et al., 1999). It has been found that highly identified sports fans are more likely to exhibit a probability of causing physical harm to

individuals and players supporting the opposing team than fans with lower levels of identification (Wann et al., 1999). In a study comparing the levels of sports fanaticism with the Buss–Perry Aggression Questionnaire scores among sports fans, a positive correlation was found between the level of sports fanaticism and both verbal and physical aggression among male sports fans (Wann et al., 2002). Dimmock and Grove did not find any differences between highly identified and lowly identified fans in terms of aggressive behavior. However, it has been noted that highly identified fans have lower levels of self-control in controlling their behaviors (Dimmock and Grove, 2005; Wann et al., 1994).

Trait anger refers to the frequency with which situational anger is experienced, whereas anger-out measures the ease of expressing anger. An individual who identifies strongly with a sports team may experience emotional lability during a sporting event, which may prevent them from controlling their behaviors, and those who feel that their identity is under threat may experience emotions that lead to a loss of behavioral control (Wann et al., 2001). In order to maintain their self-esteem following their team's failure, highly identified fans attempt to elevate their diminished self-esteem through hostile behaviors directed toward players or supporters of the opposing team (Wann, 1993; Wann et al., 1999).

According to the findings of this study, fans who have a higher level of TI differ from fans with lower TI in terms of anger style, characterized by heightened levels of anger-out, and structural anger, characterized by elevated levels of trait anger. This result indicates that in our sample, fans with high levels of TI are not only inclined toward aggressive behavior due to the atmosphere created by the sporting event, but they are also more predisposed to experiencing anger than fans with lower identification levels.

Fink found that being a fan of a successful team and the feelings of success raised one's self-esteem and served as the motivation for a strong identification with one's team (Fink et al.,

2002). Branscombe and Wann reported a positive correlation between the level of identification with a team and self-esteem and stated that the sense of commitment that an individual feels to something greater than themselves can increase self-esteem and decrease the frequency of depression (Branscombe and Wann, 1991). Similarly, Sarı found a positive relationship between the level of commitment to a team, self-esteem, and life satisfaction (Sarı et al., 2011).

Based on the analysis of the relationship between TI and positive and negative emotions, it has been determined that there is a positive association between high TI and emotions such as happiness, joy, satisfaction, life satisfaction, and contentment. Conversely, there is a negative association between high TI and negative emotions, such as unhappiness, regret, worthlessness, sensitivity, hopelessness, and feelings of exclusion (Branscombe and Wann, 1991). In light of these findings, it is concluded that the individual's distancing from feelings of loneliness and the sense of belonging positively affect their self-concept. When assessing the positive correlation between TI and self-esteem, an alternative perspective suggests that individuals who already possess high levels of self-esteem are more inclined to develop a stronger identification with sports teams. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to refrain from identifying themselves as supporters of a team due to the fear of ridicule or confrontation with an opponent. On the other hand, individuals with high self-esteem are not hesitant to express their support for the team they endorse (Wann et al., 2000). However, considering that sports fans come from very different social backgrounds and lifestyles, it is observed that not all individuals with high TI are likely to have high self-esteem (Branscombe and Wann, 1991). In this study, there was no significant correlation between the level of self-esteem and the level of TI, which may be attributed to the limited number of participants characterized by low self-esteem among the total number of participants ($n = 24$, 4.2%). As stated by Wann, TI is a factor that affects collective self-esteem rather than individual self-esteem (Wann, 1994).

Limitations

The study's cross-sectional methodology precludes the establishment of causality between team identification (TI) and emotional consequences, such as anger. Although our hypothesis was that anger would be more powerfully evoked by higher levels of TI, it is also plausible that those who are prone to anger are more likely to strongly identify with a team. Future studies utilizing experimental or longitudinal methods would be beneficial to alleviate this issue by determining the directionality of this link.

Our study included a rather uniform student cohort, unlike the varied fan groups present in stadiums. The homogeneity within the selected group constitutes a limitation on self-esteem levels. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that self-esteem levels can be affected by different variables, including personal abilities, familial background, and social relationships, which, beyond the concept of TI, also constitutes a limitation of our study. Future study utilizing longitudinal or experimental methods will be beneficial in establishing the directionality of this link.

The present study's inability to adequately define the target of anger regarding to team identification is another limitation. The source of the participants' stated anger—whether aimed toward opposing team fans, officials, or other elements inside the sporting context—remains uncertain. Future research should identify the targets of anger to enhance the comprehension of emotional expression dynamics in the context of sports fandom.

CONCLUSION

In the present research, we examined TI in connection to self-esteem, trait anger, and anger expression styles against the backdrop of sporting events that frequently involve violent incidents and participation from a significant portion of society. In summary, this study highlights those higher levels of team identification among university sports fans are

positively correlated with increased levels of trait anger and externalized anger (anger-out), whereas no significant correlation was found between team identification and individual self-esteem.

We observed a positive relationship between team identification levels and trait anger, a structural component of anger, as well as the externalizing dimension of anger within the context of anger expression styles. Our data indicate there is no significant positive or negative relationship between sports team identification and self-esteem levels.

Given the continuing threat of violence at sporting events, which has resulted in significant damages both nationally and globally in recent years, numerous strategies will need to be utilized to help solve this issue. It is imperative to provide psychological assistance and psycho-education for their mental awareness to athletes and trainers, especially those with whom fans resonate. Based on these findings, it would be beneficial to develop and promote psychoeducational programs specifically aimed at anger management and healthy emotional expression among university students and sports fans. Such interventions could play a critical role in preventing violence incidents during sports events.

Another proposed preventive intervention is the implementation of anger management training and the instruction of healthy emotional expression skills inside fan groups characterized by strong group identification, to avert the escalation of rage among sports fans into violent incidents. Access to mental health care should also be enabled for those involved in violent incidents.

Finally, it is expedient to encourage fan engagement in sporting events, not only as spectators but also as active participants in the sport, to cultivate a more positive and inclusive sports culture.

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