



HAZING IN WOMEN'S SPORT: ROOKIE SEASON EXPERIENCES AND ATHLETES' PERCEPTIONS OF CLUB POLICIES

Can Çavin Ötken^{1*} 

¹  Ankara University, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Ankara, TÜRKİYE

Abstract: This study aims to examine the hazing experiences endured by professional female athletes during their rookie seasons and to investigate how athletes perceive the hazing-related policies implemented by sports clubs throughout this process. Accordingly, the study employs a qualitative descriptive design; semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 18 Turkish female team sport athletes who had completed their rookie season. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The research findings revealed four categories: types of hazing, the effects of hazing, mechanisms of coping with hazing, and sports clubs' policies on hazing. The study found that female athletes were predominantly exposed to psychological hazing and menial tasks during their rookie seasons. Respondents reported that hazing created exclusionary effects rather than fostering team cohesion, with peer support emerging as the most common coping strategy. They also emphasized that their sports clubs lacked effective and consistent anti-hazing policies. The study makes a unique contribution to literature by revealing how hazing practices are legitimized through cultural norms and demonstrating the inadequacy of policy mechanisms developed by sports clubs to address this issue.

Keywords: Female athletes, hazing in sports, hazing policies, rookie season experiences

KADIN SPORUNDA KABUL SINAMALARI: ÇAYLAK SEZONU DENEYİMLERİ VE SPORCULARIN KULÜP POLİTİKALARINA YÖNELİK ALGILARI

Öz: Bu çalışma, profesyonel kadın sporcuların çaylak sezonlarında maruz kaldıkları kabul sınavı deneyimlerini incelemeyi ve yer aldıkları kulüplerin bu konuya ilişkin politikalarını, sporcuların algıları doğrultusunda araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda araştırmada nitel betimsel desen kullanılmış; çaylak sezonunu tamamlamış 18 Türk kadın takım sporcusuyla yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler nitel içerik analiziyle çözümlenmiştir. Araştırma bulguları; kabul sınavı türleri, kabul sınavının etkileri, kabul sınavlarıyla başa çıkma yöntemleri ve kulüplerin kabul sınavlarına yönelik politikaları olmak üzere dört kategoriye ortaya koymuştur. Kadın sporcuların çaylak sezonlarında ağırlıklı olarak psikolojik baskı ve angarya işler içerikli kabul sınavlarına maruz kaldıkları görülmüştür. Katılımcılar, kabul sınavlarının takım uyumunu artırmaktan ziyade dışlayıcı etkiler yarattığını ifade etmiş, bu süreçle baş etme adına en sık başvurulan yöntemin akran desteği olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Buna ek olarak, spor kulüplerinin kabul sınavlarına karşı etkili ve tutarlı politikalarından yoksun olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Bu çalışma, kabul sınavlarının kültürel normlar yoluyla nasıl meşrulaştırıldığını ve spor kulüplerinin bu husustaki politikalarının yetersizliğini ortaya koyarak literatüre özgün bir katkı sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın sporcular, sporda kabul sınavı, kabul sınavı politikaları, çaylak sezonu deneyimleri



* Corresponding Author: Can Çavin Ötken, Asst. Prof., E-mail: cancavinotkan@ankara.edu.tr

INTRODUCTION

Hazing is a social phenomenon in which new members are subjected to humiliating, degrading, or dangerous activities as a prerequisite for group acceptance. Although such practices have been documented across various institutional contexts, sports teams represent one of the most prominent settings in which hazing persists as a recurring and often normalized phenomenon. In sports environments characterized by pronounced hierarchies, experienced athletes typically assume dominant roles while rookies are compelled to adopt subordinate positions, creating fertile ground for hazing practices to take hold (Bruner et al., 2008; Tibbert et al., 2015). Modern scholarship increasingly emphasizes the psychological and physical harms associated with these practices, and hazing continues to raise substantial concerns regarding its detrimental effects on individual and collective well-being (Allan & Madden, 2012; Johnson, 2011).

While hazing research has historically centered on male athletic contexts, women's sports teams have their own distinct dynamics that warrant dedicated scholarly attention. The assumption that hazing is primarily a male phenomenon has long obscured the realities faced by female athletes. Understanding hazing in women's sports therefore requires moving beyond frameworks developed primarily in male athletic contexts, as gender roles and power dynamics shape both the nature of hazing practices and the ways in which they are perceived and legitimized (Allan et al., 2018; Chin, 2024; Lafferty & Wakefield, 2017; McCready, 2019).

Research has demonstrated that hazing practices exist in women's sports teams in ways that show both similarities and meaningful differences compared to male teams. While physical violence, psychological abuse, and coercive behaviors have been documented in both contexts, hazing in women's sports teams tends to involve less sexual abuse and overt power-based pressure. Instead, psychological hazing in women's teams appears to manifest through less visible yet potentially harmful forms such as emotional manipulation and social exclusion during initiation processes (Hamilton et al., 2013; Johnson, 2002; Kirby & Wintrup, 2002; Waldron & Krane, 2005). This distinction is significant, as the subtler nature of psychological hazing in women's sport may render it less visible to administrators and policymakers, thereby complicating prevention efforts.

The consequences of hazing extend beyond the individual athlete, adversely affecting team cohesion, mental health, and athletic performance (Campo et al., 2005; Van Raalte et al., 2007). Addressing these consequences requires not only awareness but also consistent institutional action. In this regard, the responsibilities of sports clubs are particularly significant, encompassing the development of educational programs, awareness-raising initiatives, and organizational practices that foster a healthy team culture (Chin & Johnson, 2024; Fields et al., 2009; Owen et al., 2008; Salinas et al., 2018). Preventing hazing from becoming an entrenched part of sports culture depends on policies actively embraced by clubs, coaches, and administrators, with a shared commitment to building inclusive and safe environments for rookie athletes. Recognizing the need for institutional responses, numerous countries have introduced legal regulations targeting hazing. In the United States, 44 states have criminalized hazing practices. Similarly, France recognizes hazing as an illegal act subject to fines and imprisonment. While Canadian legislation does not explicitly address hazing, existing laws protect against physical and psychological harm that may occur during such acts (Bennett, 2018; Crow & McGlone, 2024). Nevertheless, not all countries have developed specific legislative frameworks in this area, leaving considerable gaps in institutional protection.

Türkiye represents one such context. Although Türkiye's legal framework lacks specific legislation targeting hazing in hierarchical structures, Article 17 of the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye stipulates that no one shall be subjected to torture, maltreatment, or penalties incompatible with human dignity, and the Turkish Penal Code criminalizes bullying, humiliation, violence, and threats, all of which are acts commonly associated with hazing. Beyond these legal provisions, the structural organization of Turkish sports creates a distinct hazing context. Unlike countries such as the United States and Canada, where the transition to rookie status predominantly occurs within academic athletic programs, sporting activities in Türkiye are organized primarily through club-based systems, where athletes may turn professional as early as age 15 or 16 and potentially join teams with significantly older teammates during their rookie season.

The present study emerges from this intersection of structural and cultural particularities. Two factors lend it particular originality. First, the club-based organization of Turkish sports produces rookie transition dynamics that differ substantially from those documented in the academically embedded sport programs that dominate existing literature (Anderson et al., 2011; Chin, 2024; Diamond et al., 2015; Fields et al., 2009; Jeckell et al., 2018; Kerschner & Allan, 2021). Second, cultural factors specific to the Turkish context, including women's societal roles, attitudes shaped by prevailing social norms, and the dynamics of local sports culture, may contribute to hazing manifestations and institutional responses that diverge from those reported in Western settings (Cimino et al., 2019; Johnson, 2011; Nuwer, 2000). Accordingly, this study aims to examine the hazing experiences of Turkish female athletes during their rookie seasons across various team sports and to investigate the related policies that sports clubs implement.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to reveal professional female athletes' hazing experiences during their rookie seasons and their perceptions of accompanying club-level anti-hazing policies. This approach was selected because it provides a comprehensive and straightforward summary of events in everyday terms, allowing the researcher to stay close to the data and respondents' accounts without requiring highly interpretive or philosophical frameworks (Sandelowski, 2000).

Research group

The study sample consists of 18 female athletes selected through criterion sampling as the primary sampling strategy, whereby respondents were chosen based on predetermined eligibility criteria (Patton, 2014). Accordingly, the study included Turkish female football, basketball, volleyball, and handball athletes who had completed their rookie seasons. These four disciplines were selected as they represent the team sports with the highest number of licensed female athletes in Türkiye (Kadınlar için Spor ve Fiziksel Aktivite Derneği, 2023; Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu, 2024). Particular attention was paid to ensuring that respondents from the same sport had completed their rookie seasons with different teams. Snowball sampling was employed as a supplementary recruitment method to access eligible respondents who met the predetermined criteria but were otherwise difficult to reach, a methodological approach particularly valuable for investigating sensitive topics such as hazing experiences. Although sport-specific differences were initially considered as a potential analytical focus, the data did not reveal sport-specific variation in hazing practices across disciplines and all respondents were therefore treated as a single sample in the analysis. Data saturation was reached after the 14th interview, at which point no new codes emerged from the data. Four additional interviews were subsequently conducted, one from each sport discipline, to verify

that saturation had been fully achieved (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Demographic information of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of the respondents

Respondent	Disciplines	Age	Age in rookie season
R1	Football	22	16
R2	Football	21	17
R3	Football	25	16
R4	Basketball	20	17
R5	Basketball	21	17
R6	Basketball	21	18
R7	Basketball	26	18
R8	Basketball	22	16
R9	Basketball	20	15
R10	Volleyball	22	16
R11	Volleyball	23	17
R12	Volleyball	24	17
R13	Volleyball	21	15
R14	Volleyball	23	16
R15	Handball	19	16
R16	Handball	23	17
R17	Handball	23	17
R18	Handball	21	17

Data collection tool

A semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection tool. To ensure content validity, the interview form was reviewed by three faculty members who are experts in the field. As a result of expert evaluations, the sentence structure of one question was revised. Pilot interviews with three respondents indicated that the questions were clear and comprehensible.

Data collection method

The interviews began with closed-ended questions to gather demographic information such as sport discipline, age, and age during the rookie season. Subsequently, respondents were presented with semi-structured questions supported by probing follow-up questions. These questions focused on elements such as the presence of hazing experiences, the manner and process of their execution, their impact on the individual's emotional state and physical performance, their influence on team dynamics, coping mechanisms, and the policies of the sports clubs in which the respondents were involved regarding hazing. Before the interviews, respondents were thoroughly informed about the purpose and scope of the study. They were explicitly assured that they could withdraw from the interview at any time, take breaks if needed, and decline to answer any questions they did not wish to respond to. A voluntary informed consent form, which detailed that the interviews would be audio-recorded and that respondents' identities would remain confidential, was signed by all respondents. Following transcription, the interview data obtained from the audio recordings were shared with the respondents for verification, and their approval was obtained.

Data was collected through face-to-face individual interviews and recorded via audio, with each session lasting an average of 28 minutes. Audio recording was preferred because it allowed the interviewer to give full attention to the respondent and conduct a detailed examination, and because it is considered a more neutral and less intrusive method (Yeo et al., 2014). This study was approved by the Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Social and Humanities Publication Ethics Committee (Date: 05 July 2024, Decision No: 2024/13-11).

Data analysis

A hybrid qualitative content analysis was employed, in which the main categories were determined a priori based on the research questions, while subcategories and codes emerged inductively from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Respondents' identities were anonymized and coded as R1 through R18. The audio recordings were transcribed in full, and data falling outside the scope of the research were removed. Data were then assigned to the predetermined categories, and subcategories and codes were developed through iterative review of the transcripts. To ensure consistency across codes, the researcher conducted multiple reviews examining whether codes were applied uniformly across all transcripts. To enhance the credibility and confirmability of the findings, three expert faculty members conducted an external audit of the categories, subcategories, and codes. Following their feedback, revisions were made and the final coding scheme was approved. Direct quotations considered to have high representational value for each code were included.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings related to the hazing experiences of female team sport athletes during their rookie seasons and their perceptions of the policies adopted by their respective sports clubs regarding this issue. Four main categories were identified: *Types of Hazing*, *The Effects of Hazing*, *Mechanisms of Coping with Hazing*, and *Sports Clubs' Policies on Hazing*. The subcategories, codes, and respondent quotations about these categories are presented in the corresponding tables. For each code, respondent statements considered to have high representational value were included as direct quotations. Two subcategories were identified in the *Types of Hazing* category: *Psychological Hazing* and *Rookie Duties*. The codes and respondent quotes included in these subcategories are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Types of hazing category

Subcategories	Codes	Respondents' quotation
Psychological Hazing	Verbal humiliation (f = 15)	R16: <i>"The senior players on the team used to give nicknames to the new younger members. At that time, since I was somewhat overweight and ungainly, they started calling me 's***bag'... A few months later, when I approached the team captain and said that this nickname was really upsetting me, she replied, 'Alright, then let's just call you bag from now on.' Fortunately, she didn't say 'just shit.'"</i>
	Coercive threats (f = 8)	R4: <i>"In training sessions, whenever I tried to assert myself by playing a bit aggressively on defense or failed to behave as the senior players expected, there were always problems. I constantly heard threats such as, 'If you do that again, I'll break your arm,' 'You'll get beaten up,' and 'I'll get you kicked off the team.'"</i>
	Social isolation (f = 5)	R14: <i>"My friend and I were the only new young members who joined the team that season. There were senior players in the team who were 12 to 13 years older than us, and they acted as if we didn't exist... We were excluded from WhatsApp groups, not included in social conversations, and I wasn't even sure if they knew our names. We were merely on paper as team members."</i>
Rookie Duties	Menial tasks (f = 18)	R7: <i>"In my first season, I did everything except actually play basketball. Carrying the equipment, balls, and water was always the younger players' job. During training camps, we'd bring food, tea, and coffee to the senior players... No one even asked us to do it; we just did it because that's how things were."</i>
	Spatial control (f = 11)	R1: <i>"As young players, we had a designated shower area. Since the showerhead there was broken, that was the only place we could wash... Our spot in the locker room was right next to the bathroom. We constantly had to endure the smell of the septic tank... When we traveled for away games, the senior players would lie down across the four-seat benches on the bus, and us younger ones would try to squeeze into the remaining seats."</i>
	Excessive physical demands (f = 4)	R18: <i>"The senior players would make me do extra push-ups, sit-ups, and running after practice. They wouldn't accept me saying I was exhausted or worn out... They'd say, 'You'll run extra in my place, you'll work harder in my place, you have to earn your spot here.'"</i>

Three subcategories were identified within the category The Effects of Hazing: Psychological Effects, Social Effects, and Physical Effects. The codes and respondent quotations associated with these subcategories are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The effects of hazing category		
Subcategories	Codes	Respondents' quotation
Psychological Effects	Decreased motivation (f = 8)	R15: "Constantly being insulted and belittled by the handball players I looked up to as role models... After a few months, I had lost all my motivation and enthusiasm. I only continued because I didn't know what else to do."
	Low self-esteem (f = 5)	R10: "Young players are rarely given room for mistakes, but I had none at all... Our captain that rookie season would nag me over every mistake. After a while, I even forgot what I knew. I thought, 'So, I must be a really bad volleyball player, I can't handle this, maybe I should quit and do something else.'"
	Psychological distress (f = 3)	R8: "The seniors criticized everything I did, scolded me for the tiniest mistake... I tried not to show any emotion during practice to seem strong. Whatever they said, I'd just smile blankly. But once I got home, I'd cry all the time or pinch myself out of frustration."
Social Effects	Breakdown of team cohesion (f = 9)	R2: "There was a group of veterans who treated us rookies badly and constantly made us do menial tasks. We stood up to them. Some of the other experienced players supported us, and this led to cliques forming around us. We couldn't really become a team."
	Negative peer influence (f = 3)	R9: "Newly joined young players in the senior team are made to do all sorts of menial tasks. Even some of my teammates who were just a year or two older than me, and who were exempt from these chores simply because it was their second or third season, started treating me like their personal assistant. It really hurt because I had expected them to support me... After that, I started to drift apart from them."
Physical Effects	Physiological symptoms (f = 4)	R16: "My first season was a struggle to survive for me. I had to prove myself, but at the same time, I was constantly being bullied by the older girls... I went through months where I couldn't sleep thinking about what would happen to me at the next practice, and I lost my appetite during that time."
	Psychosomatic effects (f = 2)	R13: "The seniors on the team were really harsh toward me and the other younger players... I've always been someone who takes negative things to heart too much. Even though my friends told me it's normal and not to worry about it, I just couldn't manage... I had sores on my face and arms from the stress."

Under the category of Mechanisms of Coping with Hazing, three subcategories were identified: Personal Coping, Social Coping, and Appealing to Club Officials. The codes and respondent quotations corresponding to these subcategories are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Mechanisms of coping with hazing category

Subcategories	Codes	Respondents' quotation
Personal Coping	Emotional suppression (f = 6)	R6: <i>"The more I reacted or got upset, the more the seniors on the team seemed to pick on me. So I started keeping everything inside and stopped showing my emotions... And it actually worked. Of course, the bullying didn't stop completely, but after a while, it became more bearable."</i>
	Minimization (f = 6)	R3: <i>"I knew that newcomers were subjected to hazing throughout the season... I had heard it from friends who had made it to the senior team before me. I didn't take what was done to me too seriously. I didn't let it drag me down. I saw it as a temporary phase I just had to endure."</i>
	Self-reflection and growth (f = 5)	R11: <i>"The seniors' behavior and attitude toward the younger players... These were things I couldn't change. If I stood up to them or complained to management, they would have come down on me even harder. So, I kept going by telling myself that everything they did to torment me actually made me stronger and more resilient."</i>
Social Coping	Seeking peer support (f = 12)	R5: <i>"Dealing with the harsh treatment from the seniors was really hard... Luckily, there were three other rookies like me on the team. During that time, we realized that if we didn't support each other, our mental health wouldn't hold up... The four of us constantly applied therapy to each other."</i>
	Support from non-team peers (f = 4)	R17: <i>"I expected my first year to be physically very tough, but the hazing affected me much more psychologically. During that time, my close friends at school helped me a lot... As outsiders looking in, they gave me really good advice."</i>
	Family Support (f = 4)	R16: <i>"From the moment I joined the senior team, I started hearing constant insults from the seniors... That year, my mom was a great support to me. When I came home from practice crying, she kept telling me that this was a struggle and that I had to stay strong... Thanks to her, I got through those tough times."</i>
	Forming strategic alliances (f = 2)	R12: <i>"There were already existing cliques from the previous year during my first season... One group of seniors started making me do all kinds of menial tasks from the moment I arrived... I realized I couldn't handle them, so I got closer to the seniors in the other group. At least they were more merciful... They treated me like a human being."</i>
Appealing to Club Officials	Appealing to coaches (f = 8)	R5: <i>"Our assistant coach had been through the same experiences as us, she'd walked the same path and was great at communicating... We'd already accepted the hazing from the older players on the field, but when things went off the field, we'd complain to her. She'd step in right away and rein in the senior players."</i>
	Appealing to club administrators (f=3)	R4: <i>"The rookie duties they made us do became unbearable at some point... I remember starting to wonder, 'Am I a basketball player or a servant?' We went to the team manager and said, 'This can't go on.' They replied, 'Okay, I'll talk to them.' The effect lasted maybe two or three weeks. Then we were back to the same slave life again."</i>

Within the Sports Clubs' Policies on Hazing category, two subcategories were identified: Tacit Approval and Policy Absence. The codes and respondent quotations associated with these subcategories are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5. Sports clubs' policies on hazing category

Subcategories	Codes	Respondents' quotation
Tacit Approval	Cultural legitimization (f = 16)	R17: <i>"When I'd ask the senior players, 'Why am I the one doing this rookie duty?', they'd say, 'We had to do it too back in the day.' As a last resort, we'd complain to our coach, and he'd snap, That's just how it is, either deal with it or quit. Are you handball players or princesses?'... So yeah, it's become this ingrained tradition, something everyone just normalizes."</i>
	Veteran player immunity (f = 12)	R18: <i>"Our team captain was a decorated player with national team honors and championship titles. We obeyed her every command. However cruel or humiliating her words, we bit our tongues and endured... Whether she outright abused the rookies or turned training sessions into a reign of terror, coaches and management turned a blind eye. She operated with total impunity, untouchable in every sense."</i>
Policy Absence	Lack of official guidelines (f = 6)	R13: <i>"At the start of the season, I signed my contract, and a disciplinary code along with it. Of course, that document said nothing about veterans not being allowed to harass rookies, hurl insults, or make threats... None of that 'small stuff' made the cut."</i>
	Authority ambiguity (f = 4)	R1: <i>"During my rookie season on the A-team, the club was anything but professional... Managers would occasionally show up, but it was never clear who was in charge of what or who we could turn to with issues. That's why our coach ended up handling off-field matters too. And with all that, we couldn't exactly go to him saying, 'Oh, by the way, the veterans are tormenting us."</i>

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined female team athletes' hazing experiences during their rookie seasons and the hazing-related policies of their sports clubs, revealing four main categories: types of hazing, the effects of hazing, mechanisms of coping with hazing, and sports clubs' policies on hazing.

No athlete reported exposure to initiation rituals framed as welcome events. Instead, hazing manifested as prolonged seasonal practices perceived as prerequisite conditions for full team acceptance. Respondents predominantly experienced psychological hazing, including verbal humiliation, coercive threats, and social isolation, alongside rookie duties such as menial tasks and spatial control. Physical hazing was comparatively rare. This pattern is consistent with research suggesting that hazing in women's sport tends to involve less overt physical aggression and more subtle forms of psychological pressure (Hamilton et al., 2013; Lafferty & Wakefield, 2017; Waldron & Krane, 2005). The absence of more extreme hazing forms documented in the literature, such as alcohol coercion, sexual abuse, or nudity-based rituals, might be associated with broader sociocultural norms prevalent in the Turkish context, though respondents did not directly attribute this to such factors (Anderson et al., 2011; Chin et al., 2019; Fogel & Quinlan, 2020; Groves et al., 2012; Waldron & Kowalski, 2009).

Hazing produced psychological, social, and physical consequences for respondents. Psychological effects, including decreased motivation, low self-esteem, and distress, were the most prominent. Physical effects, including sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, and stress-induced somatic symptoms, emerged consistently in connection with psychological hazing experiences. As evidenced by respondent accounts, physical manifestations such as skin lesions and chronic crying appeared to be somatic expressions of sustained psychological distress rather than consequences of physical exertion, a pattern supported by broader hazing literature (Allan & Madden, 2012; Tibbert et al., 2015; Van Raalte et al., 2007). Notably, no respondent reported positive outcomes associated with hazing. This diverges from Thompson et al. (2018), who

found that socialization-oriented hazing could foster team cohesion and be perceived positively by rookies. This divergence may be attributable to the nature of hazing documented in the present study: rather than functioning as a bounded initiation ritual, hazing here took the form of continuous, season-long practices with no clear socializing purpose, which may explain why it undermined rather than reinforced team cohesion.

Respondents employed both personal and social coping strategies to manage hazing experiences, with peer support emerging as the most commonly reported mechanism. This aligns with Bruner et al. (2008), who identified teammates as a critical source of support during transitions to elite sport. Personal coping strategies such as emotional suppression, minimization, and self-reflection, while not eliminating hazing, appeared to facilitate adaptation to the team environment (Waldron & Krane, 2005). Notably, appeals to club officials proved largely ineffective, as coaches and administrators either dismissed hazing as culturally normative or were perceived by respondents as lacking clear authority to address such issues, a dynamic that points directly to the institutional deficiencies examined in the following paragraph.

Analysis of sports clubs' hazing policies revealed a consistent pattern of tacit approval and policy absence. Club officials routinely framed hazing as harmless tradition, effectively legitimizing its continuation. This cultural normalization may reflect the absence of extreme, high-profile hazing incidents in Turkish women's sport comparable to those reported in Western media contexts, which may reduce the perceived urgency of institutional intervention. Diamond et al. (2015) argue that shifting cultural perceptions is essential to preventing the institutionalization of hazing. Research further indicates that comprehensive preventive policies and training programs can effectively reduce hazing (Allan & Madden, 2012; Campo et al., 2005; Marchell et al., 2024). Scholarly perspectives diverge on the most appropriate intervention approach: some advocate for positive initiation rituals as constructive alternatives (Chin & Johnson, 2024), while others call for stricter legislative deterrents (Crow & McGlone, 2024; Salinas et al., 2018).

In conclusion, this study contributes to the hazing literature by documenting the experiences of female team athletes in Türkiye, a context underrepresented in existing research. The findings suggest that hazing in Turkish women's club sport is characterized by psychological and duty-based practices embedded in culturally legitimized traditions, rather than the extreme physical or sexual forms prevalent in Western literature. The absence of effective institutional policies highlights an urgent need for sports clubs to develop proactive, culturally sensitive anti-hazing frameworks that move beyond tacit acceptance toward meaningful governance.

Recommendations

Future studies should prioritize respondent diversification and the inclusion of policymakers and practitioners to enable a more holistic understanding of institutional approaches. Research should focus on three critical areas: (1) developing positive rituals as alternatives to hazing for rookie integration, (2) formulating culturally viable policy interventions, and (3) examining legal frameworks specifically targeting anti-hazing measures. Such investigations would yield both theoretical and practical contributions to the field.

Limitations and strengths

Research on hazing phenomena has predominantly focused on Western societies such as the U.S., U.K., and Canada. In this context, examining the experiences of female team athletes and club policies in Türkiye provides a significant and original contribution to understanding how

cultural and social norms influence such practices. However, the study's findings have limited generalizability due to the restricted number of respondents from specific sports disciplines. Additionally, relying solely on athletes' self-reported data necessarily excludes the perspectives of hazing-enforcing seniors, club administrators, and coaches regarding hazing. On the other hand, the reasons why common forms of hazing, such as forced alcohol consumption, physical violence, and sexual harassment, did not occur were not examined in order to maintain the focus of the study and were discussed only in the discussion section.

REFERENCES

- Allan, E. J., & Madden, M. (2012). The nature and extent of college student hazing. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 24(1), 83-90. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh.2012.012>
- Allan, E. J., Kerschner, D., & Payne, J. M. (2018). College student hazing experiences, attitudes, and perceptions: Implications for prevention. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 56(1), 32–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2018.1490303>
- Anderson, E., McCormack, M., & Lee, H. (2011). Male team sport hazing initiations in a culture of decreasing homophobia. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 27(4), 427-448. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558411412957>
- Bennett, C. (2018, September 3). *French universities brace for new wave of hazing with “La rentrée”*. France 24. <https://www.france24.com/en/20180831-french-universities-brace-new-wave-crackdown-hazing-rituals-la-rentree>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 13(2), 201-216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1704846>
- Bruner, M. W., Munroe-Chandler, K. J., & Spink, K. S. (2008). Entry into elite sport: A preliminary investigation into the transition experiences of rookie athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 20(2), 236-252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200701867745>
- Campo, S., Poulos, G., & Sipple, J. W. (2005). Prevalence and profiling: Hazing among college students and points of intervention. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 29(2), 137-149. <https://doi.org/10.5993/AJHB.29.2.5>
- Chin, J. W. (2024). Hazing in girls' and women's sport post-Title IX: Social change, athletes' experiences and community responses in the United States. In J. Johnson & J. W. Chin (Eds.), *Cultures of sport hazing and anti-hazing initiatives for the 21st century* (Vol. 23, pp. 145–163). Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1476-285420240000023009>
- Chin, J. W., & Johnson, J. (2024). Alternatives to sport hazing: Recommendations and actionable steps for building inclusive team ethics and practices. In J. Johnson & J. W. Chin (Eds.), *Cultures of sport hazing and anti-hazing initiatives for the 21st century (Research in the Sociology of Sport)*, Vol. 23, pp. 223–246). Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1476-285420240000023013>
- Chin, J. W., Johnson, J., Signer-Kroeker, M. A., & Holman, M. (2019). From the bottom of a bottle: A sociological examination of the use of alcohol in varsity sport hazing. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 55(7), 991-1008. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690219861607>
- Cimino, A., Toyokawa, W., Komatsu, M., Thomson, R., & Gaulin, S. J. C. (2019). Cross-cultural and cross-organizational evidence for an evolved hazing motivation. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 17(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474704919887943>
- Crow, B., & McGlone, C. (2024). The 10,000 ft view: A global analysis of the impact(s) of hazing legislation. In J. Johnson & J. W. Chin (Eds.), *Cultures of sport hazing and anti-hazing initiatives for the 21st century* (Vol. 23, pp. 69–82). Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1476-285420240000023005>

- Diamond, A. B., Callahan, S. T., Chain, K. F., & Solomon, G. S. (2015). Qualitative review of hazing in collegiate and school sports: consequences from a lack of culture, knowledge and responsiveness. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 50(3), 149-153. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2015-095603>
- Fields, S. K., Collins, C. L., & Comstock, R. D. (2009). Violence in youth sports: hazing, brawling and foul play. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 44(1), 32-37. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bjism.2009.068320>
- Fogel, C., & Quinlan, A. (2020). Sexual assault in the locker room: Sexually violent hazing in Canadian sport. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 27(3), 353-372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2020.1773952>
- Groves, M., Griggs, G., & Leflay, K. (2012). Hazing and initiation ceremonies in university sport: Setting the scene for further research in the United Kingdom. *Sport in Society*, 15(1), 117-131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03031853.2011.625287>
- Hamilton, R., Scott, D., O'Sullivan, L. F., & LaChapelle, D. L. (2013). An examination of the rookie hazing experiences of university athletes in Canada. *Canadian Journal for Social Research*, 3(1), 35-48.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Jeckell, A. S., Copenhaver, E. A., & Diamond, A. B. (2018) The Spectrum of Hazing and Peer Sexual Abuse in Sports: A Current Perspective. *Sports Health*. 10(6), 558-564. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1941738118797322>
- Johnson, J. (2002). Are sisters doing it for themselves? An analysis of gender and the sport initiation ceremony. *Journal of Canadian Woman Studies*, 21(3), 125-131. <https://cws.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cws/article/view/6634/5822>
- Johnson, J. (2011). Through the liminal: A comparative analysis of communitas and rites of passage in sport hazing and initiations. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie*, 36(3), 199-227. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/canajsocicahican.36.3.199>
- Kadınlar için Spor ve Fiziksel Aktivite Derneği. (2023). *Sporda toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği raporu* [Gender equality in sport report]. <https://www.kasfad.org>
- Kerschner, D., & Allan, E. (2021). Examining the nature and extent of hazing at five NCAA Division III institutions and considering the implications for prevention. *Journal of Amateur Sport*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.17161/jas.v7i1.13632>
- Kirby, S. L., & Wintrup, G. (2002). Running the gauntlet: An examination of initiation/hazing and sexual abuse in sport. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 8(2), 49-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600208413339>
- Lafferty, M., & Wakefield, C. (2017). Becoming part of the team: Female student athletes' engagement in initiation activities. *The Sport Psychologist*, 32(2), 125-135. <https://doi.org/10.1123/TSP.2016-0115>
- Marchell, T. C., Santacrose, L. B., Laurita, A. C., & Allan, E. J. (2024). A public health approach to preventing hazing on a university campus. *Journal of American College Health*, 72(1), 118-127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2021.2024210>
- McCready, A. M. (2019). Fraternity chapter masculine norm climates as predictors of social dominance hazing motivations. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 57(5), 532-545. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2019.1669455>
- Nuwer, H. (2000). *High school hazing: When rites become wrongs*. Franklin Watts.
- Owen, S. S., Burke, T. W., & Vichesky, D. (2008). Hazing in student organizations: Prevalence, attitudes, and solutions. *Oracle: The Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors*, 3(1), 40-58. <https://doi.org/10.25774/7s24-ez41>
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage.

- Salinas Jr, C., Boettcher, M., & Plagman-Galvin, J. (2018). A document analysis of anti-hazing policy. *Journal of Sorority and Fraternity Life Research and Practice*, 13(1), 32-50. <https://doi.org/10.25774/fmh9-m860>
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23(4), 334-340. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240X\(200008\)23:4<334::AID-NUR9>3.0.CO;2-G](https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240X(200008)23:4<334::AID-NUR9>3.0.CO;2-G)
- Thompson, J., Johnstone, J., & Banks, C. (2018). An examination of initiation rituals in a UK sporting institution and the impact on group development. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 18(5), 544–562. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2018.1439984>
- Tibbert, S. J., Andersen, M. B., & Morris, T. (2015). What a difference a “Mentally Toughening” year makes: The acculturation of a rookie. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 17, 68-78. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.10.007>
- Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu. (2024). *Kadın futbol stratejisi 2024-2027* [Women's football strategy 2024-2027]. <https://www.tff.org/Default.aspx?pageId=200&ftxtId=43594>
- Van Raalte, J. L., Cornelius, A. E., Linder, D. E., & Brewer, B. W. (2007). The relationship between hazing and team cohesion. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 30(4), 491–507.
- Waldron, J. J. (2015). Predictors of mild hazing, severe hazing, and positive initiation rituals in sport. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 10(6), 1089-1101. <https://doi.org/10.1260/1747-9541.10.6.1089>
- Waldron, J. J., & Kowalski, C. L. (2009). Crossing the line: Rites of passage, team aspects, and ambiguity of hazing. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 80(2), 291-302. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2009.10599564>
- Waldron, J. J., & Krane, V. (2005). Whatever it takes: Health-compromising behaviors in female athletes. *Quest*, 57(3), 315-329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2005.10491860>
- Yeo, A., Legard, R., Keegan, J., Ward, K., Nicholls, C. M., & Lewis, J. (2014). In-depth interviews. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 177–210).