

## **Investigation of the Faculty of Sport Sciences Students' Identity Perceptions According to the Variables of Gender and Doing Sports**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is an effect of gender and sports on the sports science students' perceptions of identity. A total of 216 students, 96 (44.4) women and 120 (55.6) men studying at Faculty of Sport Sciences, Akdeniz University, participated in the study voluntarily. The mean age of the participants was determined as  $21.31 \pm 1.37$ . In the data collection process, the Identity Scale developed by Coşkun (2004) and a form to gain certain demographical information developed by the researchers were used. The identity scale consists of 35 questions, developed as 5-point likert and 3 sub-dimensions: personal identity, social identity and collective identity. The internal consistency of the collected data was examined with  $\alpha$  and personal identity was found as .88, social identity as .77 and collective identity as .80. Statistical analyses were conducted with SPSS 25 package program, and frequency (f) and percentage (%) were used in descriptive statistics. In addition, independent sample t-test analysis was conducted to determine the differences between the two groups. As a result of the research, according to the gender, significant differences were found in favor of female participants in the personal identity sub-dimension, and in favor of male participants in the social identity sub-dimension. According to the variable of doing sports; there were statistically significant differences in favor of the participants doing sports in all sub-dimensions.

### **1. Introduction**

In addition to its physiological and psychological contribution, sports enable people to gain social development, adaptation to group work, solidarity and social membership. Sport is a concept that benefits individuals to socialize by giving them a sense of personal and social identity, as well as being all physically active (Küçük & Koç, 2004; Bruner, Dunlop and Beauchamp, 2014).

Identity is, by definition, a human-specific symptom as a social entity, as well as the characteristics and qualities, the conditions that make a person to become who she or he is. Identity can also be defined as an organism that can actively think, have thoughts, construct knowledge and define itself (Hart, 1988). Stryker and Burke (2000) said that identity exists in many modern sciences and mentioned the following three different relations of this term; social identity, collective identity and personal identity (Tajfel, 1981).

In the relevant literature, the concept of identity was examined in two dimensions as personal identity and social identity. The concept of personal identity includes human characteristics such as emotions, thoughts and personal values.

On the other hand, the social identity was developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986) in the 1970s and deals with intra-group and inter-group events. In social identity theory, the importance of creating a new identity for people through groups to which they belong or feel belonging, was highlighted. For instance, being in a fan group is thought to have an impact on people's personality and character through the time they spend in that group. Therefore, researchers frequently examined the concept of personal identity within the theory of social identity (Turner, 1985).

Identity of individuals and the reasons affecting identity have always been a subject of research in various disciplines including sports literature. Sport has an important place in the identity formation of people. In particular, social identity has been conceptualized and evolved into more functional phenomenon. In several studies, it has been revealed that there is a positive relationship between team performance and team identity which has been explained through the social identity theory (De Backer et al., 2011; Murrell and Gaertner, 1992). It is also possible to say that soccer players' perceptions of harmony and justice regarding the coach affect their social identity as well as their performance (Zucchermaglio, 2005). Dyck (2003) also suggests that the successful sports activity directly or indirectly affects the identity of people.

Universities aim to raise socially qualified people together with their education missions and to enable them to take place in social life. The units that undertake the sportive mission in universities are undoubtedly the Faculty of Sports Sciences. Although students studying at the faculties of sports sciences have been involved in sports during some of their lives, some of them do not continue their active sports life. This research has been designed with the hypothesis that whether doing sports actively has an impact on the concept of identity even if it has a sports background. Thus, the purpose of the research is to examine the identity of students studying at the faculty of sports sciences with regard to the status of doing sports actively.

## 2. Material and Method

### 2.1. Research Model

In this research, the survey model, which is a descriptive research method, was used. Survey model is applied to understand participants' thoughts, perceptions or attitudes, and the studies in which the survey model is utilized, includes more participants compared to other research designs (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Karadeniz & Demirel 2009).

### 2.2 Research Group

A total of 216 Faculty of Sports Sciences students studying at Akdeniz University ( $M_{age} = 21.31 \pm 1.37$ ) participated in this study voluntarily. The descriptive information is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistical Information of Participants

Gender	f	%
Female	96	44,4
Male	120	55,6
Total	216	100,0
Active sports	f	%
Yes	114	52,8
No	102	47,2
Total	216	100,0

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools

The personal information form prepared by researchers and the Identity Scale, which was developed by Coşkun (2004), were used to collect data. Identity Scale was determined as valid and reliable to use on university students. It consists of 35 items using a Likert scale with 5 steps and has three sub-dimensions as follows Personal identity, social identity and collective identity (Coşkun, 2004).

## 2.4 Data Analysis

The internal consistency of the responses to the Identity Scale was examined with Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ). The results obtained are as follows; personal identity was found as .88, social identity as .77 and collective identity as .80. In addition, the alpha obtained for the total scale was determined as .94. For the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics (percent (%), frequency (f)) and independent sample t-test analysis were used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the two groups. Spss 25.0 statistical package program was used for analyses and the statistical significance level was accepted as  $p < 0.05$ .

## 3. Findings

**Table 2.** The average, standard deviation and kurtosis-skewness results of the responses given to the identity scale sub-dimensions

Sub-Dimensions	n	$\bar{X}$	Ss	skewness	kurtosis
Personal Identity	216	38,22	,8,26	-1,143	1,561
Social Identity		21,91	5,75	-,145	-,226
Collective Identity		27,34	6,77	-,643	,253

Table 2 shows means, standard deviations and the skewness and kurtosis values, which were utilized to test normality, for each sub-dimension. When skewness and kurtosis values are examined, it is determined that the analysis results are in the range of +2 -2 values for all sub-dimensions and therefore show normal distribution (Tabachnick ve Fidell 2013).

**Table 3.** The t-test analysis results according to the gender

Sub-Dimensions	Gender	n	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t	p
Personal Identity	Female	96	39,87	8,55	2,667	,008*
	Male	120	36,90	7,80		
Social Identity	Female	96	20,90	5,45	2,331	,021*
	Male	120	22,72	5,88		
Collective Identity	Female	96	27,34	7,01	,007	,995
	Male	120	27,35	6,60		

p<0.05

In Table 3, independent sample t-test was conducted to determine whether the personal identity, social identity and collective identity of the participants showed a statistically significant difference according to the gender variable. In the results, a statistically significant difference was found in the sub-dimension of personal identity,  $t(214) = 2,667$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . According to the results, the average of the female participants (39.87) is higher than the average of the male participants (36.90). When the eta-square value of the difference obtained is examined, it can be said that the effect size is small (Richardson, 2011).

In the results, a statistically significant difference was found in the sub-dimension of social identity,  $t(214)=2,331$ ,  $p=.021$ ,  $\eta^2=.03$ . According to the results, the average of the male participants (22.72) is higher than the average of the female participants (20.90). When the eta-square value of the difference obtained is examined, it can be said that the effect size is small (Richardson, 2011).

**Table 4.** *T-test analysis results according to the status of doing sports actively*

Sub-Dimensions	Active Sports	n	$\bar{X}$	Sd	t	p
Personal Identity	Yes	96	39,44	6,34	2,274	,024*
	No	120	36,85	9,83		
Social Identity	Yes	96	23,31	4,72	3,835	,000*
	No	120	20,35	6,39		
Collective Identity	Yes	96	28,78	5,92	3,387	,001*
	No	120	25,73	7,31		

p<0.05

In Table 4, independent sample t-test was conducted in order to determine whether the personal identity, social identity and collective identity of the participants showed a statistically significant difference according to the status of doing sports actively. In the results, a statistically significant difference was found in the sub-dimension of personal identity,  $t(214) = 2,274$ ,  $p = .024$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . According to the results, it is seen that the average of the participants (39.44) who actively involve in sports are higher than the average of the non-active participants (36.85). When the eta-square value of the difference obtained is examined, it can be said that the effect size is small.

A statistically significant difference was found in the social identity sub-dimension,  $t(214) = 3,835$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ . According to the results, it is seen that the average of the participants (23,31) who are actively doing sports are higher than the average of the participants (20,35) who do not do sport actively. When the eta-square value of the difference obtained is examined, it can be said that the effect size is medium.

A statistically significant difference was found in the collective identity sub-dimension,  $t(214) = 3,387$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . According to the results, it is seen that the average of the participants who are actively doing sports (28,78) is higher than the average of the non-active participants (25,73). When the eta-square value of the difference obtained is examined, it can be said that the effect size is medium (Richardson, 2011).

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The average of identity scale sub-dimensions used for research purposes was 38.22 for personal identity, 21.91 for social identity and 27.34 for collective identity sub-dimension.

A statistically significant difference was found in favor of female participants (39.87) in the personal identity sub-dimension according to the gender variable of the students of the faculty of sports science who participated in our study. On the other hand, according to the gender variable, there was a statistically significant difference in the social identity sub-dimension in favor of male (22,72) participants.

Statistically significant differences were detected in all sub-dimensions of the identity scale according to the status of doing sports actively or not. Statistically significant differences were determined in the personal identity (39.44), social identity (23.31) and collective identity sub-dimensions (28.78) in favor of participants engaging in sport actively.

In their researches, Karakaş (2017), Proios (2012) and Namlı and Tekkurşun Demir (2018) found significant differences in favor of male participants in the social identity sub-dimension. We can say that these results are in line with the findings of our research.

However, Elasky (2006), Yanar, Kırındı & Can (2017) and Saraç and Toprak (2017) reported that they found significant differences in favor of female participants in the social identity sub-dimension according to gender variable. It can be said that the differences obtained are due to the sample sizes and differences. It has been observed that the studies in the related literature are both supportive and not supportive of our findings.

When the researches are examined, it is seen that the perception of social identity of people who do team sports is

perceived more stronge (Murrell and Gaertner, 1992). In the studies conducted, the concept of personal identity in general was discussed in the literature on the social identity theory because it tries to be explained within the scope of social identity theory. Researches conducted in which people's social identity perceptions develop as a result of being in the sports environment are supportive (Bruner et al. 2017). In the results of our research, significant differences were found in the personal identity, social identity and collective identity sub-dimensions in favor of individuals who actively do sports. When the related literature is examined, it is seen that most of the studies support our research findings.

As a result it seems possible to say for people who are in sports environment that it contributes to their own identity with the development of feelings such as competitiveness, solidarity and friendship. In social identity theory, the effect of the group of people on the character of that person is examined. In this context, our research results fully support this and reveal that doing sports makes an important contribution to the perception of identity. As a suggestion; It is thought that the sample group of our research can be expanded and more comprehensive results can be achieved. In addition, it is thought that examining the identity perceptions of individuals who do sports according to variables such as type of sport, age, and educational status may provide a better understanding of the impact of sports on identity.

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