



## Examination of the psychological commitment to team of the students of Faculty of Sports Sciences

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the psychological commitment to team of the students of the Faculty of Sport Sciences. The sample of the study consisted of 242 students (97 female, 145 male) in the Physical Education and Sports Teaching, Coaching Education, Recreation and Sports Management Departments. "Personal Information Form" which was created by researchers and the Turkish version (Eskiler et al., 2011) of "Psychological Commitment to Team" (PCT) scale which was developed by Mahony et al. (2000) were used as a data collection tool in this research. Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis H test were used to analyze the data. Analyzes were made on the total score of PCT. For this study, Cronbach's Alpha was found as .80 for the total score. As the result of analyzes, the level of "psychological commitment to team" of the students was found to be high. While there was no significant difference between gender and age variables with the scores obtained from PCT scale, there was a significant difference between department, licensed product purchases, years of being a sports fan, desire to work and possibility of working with the scores obtained from PCT scale. As a result, hypothesis 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 were accepted, while hypothesis 2 and 3 were rejected.

**Keywords:** : Psychological commitment to team; sports; team; sports fan; student.

### Introduction

Day by day, sports is becoming an important part of the society. In this context, it is like an infinite universe for education, management, health, recreational, professional and also for scientific research. However, there is a mass of spectators following the sport. These spectators tend to be fans of the teams they feel close, they love and feel commitment to. Although the football fans are on the frontline, sports branches or the teams that the spectators are fan of vary in different societies and cultures.

Because of the rapid changes that take place in the world, people are in a great dissatisfaction with the spiritual direction, even though they reach the level of satisfaction from the material side. People filling the stadiums with the problem of dissatisfaction are the masses called spectators and supporters (Kuru and Var, 2009). In Turkish, sports fan literally means; 1. follower, 2. people who are commitment to the colors, clubs or flags that an athlete or athletes represent (TDK, 2018). In English, a sport that people are going to watch (CD, 2018). The individuals who come together

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constitute the “sports fans” phenomenon (Kılıçgil and Partal, 2003). According to Shank (1999), sports fans are emotional integration of an individual into a sports organization, and personal initiatives. According to Trail and James (2001), it is the degree to which individuals devote themselves to sports teams or athletes. It is seen that the terms of sports spectator and sports fan are used instead of each other (Eskiler et al., 2011). Sports fans refer to emotional and behavioral concepts such as affection, sense of belonging, support, identification, and so on. Sports fan classification was made by Hunt et al. (1999). This fan classification is as follows; temporary fan, regional fan, loyal fan, fanatic fan and dysfunctional fan (Hunt et al., 1999, Parent and Chappelet, 2017). However, in this study, sports spectator or sports fan classification was not made.

The conceptual model of the psychological commitment to a sports team is represented by 9 attitude characteristics and categorized in three dimensions 1. subjective beliefs, the importance of the attitude object, certainty, 2. cognitive structure, amount of knowledge, cognitive response, accessibility, direct knowledge, 3. attitude valence (Ha, 2005). In a study, it is mentioned that, gradually, at a great speed, it is transformed into a society that does not do sports but only watches, and who likes to talk about sports (especially football) (Kaplan, 2012). In another study, it was mentioned that sports fans originated from human needs and that sports fans can be assessed in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (belongingness). According to this need, people want to belong to a group, they also act to feel belonging (Eskiler et al., 2011). Sporting events are experienced by spectators and fans. Their feeling of winning and losing is not tangible, but as a consumer they can touch and buy a tangible sporting product (Hedlund, 2011).

Based on the conceptualizations of commitment in organizations (Meyer and Allen 1984), marriage (Thompson and Spainer 1983), and social exchange (Cook and Emerson 1978), Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined relationship commitment as an exchange partner that believes that the relationship with another person is so important that it will require maximum effort to sustain it.

It can be argued that commitment to a sport team has existed from time to time when the concept of the audience emerged. However, there are very few studies on this emotional situation. As a result of the growing consumer society, researches are usually related to marketing products such as tickets, products etc. According to Mahony et al. (2000), in some studies where sports fans are not involved, individuals who have emotional commitment to a product or service have positive attitudes towards re-purchasing the product or service and evaluating the brand. In addition, it is a sign of commitment that sports fans are rejoined the sporting event, and the psychological processes affecting participation should also be considered. According to Al-Msallam (2015), customer loyalty, an important issue in marketing research, has become an important concern for managers, and a strategic obsession for many.

There has been a lot of researches on the sports fan in the sport sciences (Taşğın, 2000; Taşğın, 2002, Demirel et al., 2007; Çağlayan, 2003; Aydın et al., 2008; Erdoğan, 2008; Aycan et al., 2009; Kuru, 2009; Koçer, 2012; Tutkun et al., 2012; Gençer et al., 2012; Abdürrezzak, 2015; Giray and Girişken, 2015; Özbakan, 2015; Reyhan, 2015; Tepeköylü, 2016), mostly football fans, and about the commitment to team goals (Şenel et al., 2017), but there has been few researches (Giray and Salman, 2008; Sarı et al., 2011; Dinç and Demircan, 2016) on the psychological commitment to team. Therefore, it is thought that this study will be important for the contribution to sports researches in Turkey.

As a result of the literature review, conceptual information about the subject has been collected. For this research, the subject of interest is psychological commitment to the team regardless of a certain sports team (sports club) fan. The aim of this study is to examine the psychological

commitment to the sports team of the students in the Faculty of Sport Sciences. For this purpose, the hypotheses to be tested on the students are as follows;

Hypothesis for determining the psychological commitment to sports team:

Hypothesis 1 *PCT scores of students are high.*

Hypotheses related to demographic variables:

Hypothesis 2 *There is a significant difference between gender and PCT scores.*

Hypothesis 3 *There is a significant difference between age and PCT scores.*

Hypothesis 4 *There is a significant difference between department and PCT scores.*

Hypothesis 5 *There is a significant difference between licensed product purchase and PCT scores.*

Hypothesis 6 *There is a significant difference between years of being a fan and PCT scores.*

Hypothesis 7 *There is a significant difference between the first goal to work in the sports club and PCT scores.*

Hypothesis 8 *There is a significant difference between the try all possibilities to work in the sports club and PCT scores.*

## Method

### Research Group

The study population of the study is composed of the students in the Faculty of Sport Sciences of a public university. The sample of the research consists of 242 students studying in the departments of Coaching Education (CE), Physical Education and Sports (PE), Recreation (R) and Sports Management (SM) in 2016-2017 academic years, in Denizli-Turkey. The sample of the study was formed by easy sampling method. The results obtained from the "Personal Information Form" are as follows:

Participants were 242 students, 97 female (40%) and 145 male (60%). Participant's age groups were "20 years and below" 65 (27%), "21-25 years" 162 (67%) and "26 years and over" 15 (6%). Participants, according to departments: PE 46 (19%), CE 53 (22%), R 52 (21%) and SM 91 (38%). Licensed product purchase status: 168 (69%) students answered "yes" and 74 (31%) answered "no". When the years of being a fan was examined, 12 students (5%) "less than 1 year", 8 students (3%) "1-5 years", 28 students (12%) "6-10 years", 50 students (21%) "11-15 years" and 144 students "16 years and over" answered. Is it your first goal to work in the sports club you fan? 73 (30%) students answered "yes" and 169 (70%) answered "no". Would you try all the possibilities to work in the sports club you fan? 124 (51%) students answered "yes" and 118 (49%) answered "no".

### Data Collection Tools

In the research, "Personal Information Form" was created in order to learn the characteristics of the students such as gender, age, education, etc. Based on the scale development studies of Churchill (1979) and Pritchard et al. (1999), "The Psychological Commitment to Team" Scale (PCT) was developed by Mahony et al. (2000). In this research, The Turkish version of the scale of PCT was used as a data collection tool. Eskiler et al. (2011) adopted it to Turkish language, tested its reliability and validity. The test-retest correlation of the Turkish version was found to be 0.54. In the study conducted by Eskiler et al. (2011), the scale consisted of 3 subscale, and Cronbach's Alpha values of the scale for the total score was .80 and for the subscales were 1st factor .83, 2nd factor .69 and 3rd factor .57. Turkish version of PCT has 14 items rate on 7 point Likert-type scale from "1-completely disagree" to "7- completely agree". The reversal of the scores obtained for the negative items (1., 3., 8. and 14.) on the scale implies high commitment, which is the resultant total

score. The scores that can be obtained from the scale are: the highest 98, and the lowest 14. The PCT scale is used to measure the commitment of sports fan.

### Data Analysis

In this study, SPSS 15.0 package program was used for statistical procedures. In the analysis of the data, Z-test and Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) tests were used to determine whether the scores obtained from the variables are normally distributed. It has been determined that the resulting analysis data are not normally distributed. The Mann Whitney U-Test for independent samples was used to determine the difference between the two groups, and the Kruskal Wallis H-Test for independent samples was used to determine the difference more than two groups (Büyüköztürk, 2018). Games-Howell test and Mann Whitney-U test were made to find out which groups the difference was from. Level of significance was determined to be .05. For this study, Cronbach's Alpha value of the scale for the total score was found to be .80, and for the subscales were 1st factor .76, 2nd factor .72 and 3rd factor .68.

### Results

The results of this research can be generalized to Faculty of Sport Sciences students of a state university in Turkey.

The result of the psychological commitment to the sport team:

**Table 1.** Minimum, maximum, mean and standart deviation of variables

PCT scale	n	min	max	$\bar{X}$	sd
Points	242	29	98	73.54	14.490

The highest score that can be obtained from the PCT was 98, and the lowest score was 14. According to this result, it was found that students' scores are higher than the average.

The findings of the hypotheses are established for the determination of psychological commitment to the sports team of the students are given in the tables below.

The results of the hypotheses:

**Table 2.** Results of Mann Whitney-U test according to gender and PCT scale scores

Gender	n	$\bar{x}_{rank}$	$\sum_{rank}$	U	z	P
Female	97	120.08	11648.00			
Male	145	122.45	17755.00	6895.00	-.258	.797
Total	242					

p>.05

There was no significant difference between females and males for the PCT scale (U=6895.00, p>.05). However, when the rank averages of the groups were taken into consideration, it was seen that men have higher PCT scores than women.

**Table 3.** Results of Kruskal Wallis-H test according to age groups and PCT scale scores

Groups	n	$\bar{x}_{rank}$	$\chi^2$	sd	p
20 years and below	65	121.73			
21-25 years	162	123.19	1.237	2	.539
26 years and over	15	102.20			

p&gt;.05

The results of the analysis to age groups showed that there was no significant difference between the scores of the PCT scale and age groups [ $\chi^2(2)=1.23$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. This result showed that age variable did not have an effect on psychological commitment of students. Considering the rank averages of the groups, it was seen that the scores of the 1st and 2nd groups were close to each other, and students which were "26 years and over" had the lowest PCT score.

**Table 4.** Results of Kruskal Wallis-H test according to department and PCT scale scores

Groups	n	$\bar{x}_{rank}$	$\chi^2$	sd	p	Significant difference
Physical Education and Sport	46	140.77				PE-SM
Coaching Education	53	119.60	8.956	3	.030	R-SM
Recreation	52	132.51				
Sports Management	91	106.57				

p&lt;.05

Kruskall Wallis-H test analysis according to department showed that there was a significant difference between the scores of the PCT scale and departments [ $\chi^2(3)=8.95$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. This result showed that departments have different influences on psychological commitment of students.

**Table 5.** Results of Mann Whitney-U test according to licensed product purchase and PCT scale scores

Groups	n	$\bar{x}_{rank}$	$\sum_{rank}$	U	z	p
Yes	168	138.92	23338.00			
No	74	81.96	6065.00	3290.00	-5.834	.000
Total	242					

p&lt;.05

There was a significant difference between students who bought licensed products (yes) and students who did not buy licensed products (no) for the PCT scale ( $U=3290.00$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 6.** Results of the Kruskal Wallis-H test according to the years of being a fan and PCT scale scores

Groups	n	$\bar{x}_{rank}$	$\chi^2$	sd	p	Significant difference
a. Less than 1 year	12	62.13				a- d/e
b. Between 1-5 years	8	74.75				b- d/e
c. Between 6-10 years	28	105.55	16.340	4	.003	
d. Between 11-15 years	50	133.25				
e. 16 years and over	144	128.07				

p&lt;.05

According to the results of the analysis, there was a significant difference between the year of being a fan and the scores of the PCT scale [ $\chi^2(4)=16.34$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. In other words, the psychological commitment to the sports team of the students varies according to their the years of being a fan-how long they are fan of the same team.

**Table 7.** The results of Mann Whitney-U test according to the first goal to work in the sports club and PCT scale scores

Groups	n	$\bar{x}_{rank}$	$\sum_{rank}$	U	z	P
Yes	73	144.18	10525.50			
No	169	111.70	18877.50	4512.05	-3.314	.001
Total	242					

$p<.05$

There was a significant difference between the students who answered “yes” and the students who answered “no” for the PCT scale ( $U=4512.05$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 8.** The results of Mann Whitney-U test according to try all the possibilities to work and PCT scale scores

Groups	n	$\bar{x}_{rank}$	$\sum_{rank}$	U	z	P
Yes	124	138.24	17141.50			
No	118	103.91	12261.50	5240.50	-3.814	.000
Total	242					

$p<.05$

Mann Whitney-U test analysis according to try all the possibilities to work in the sports club you fan showed that there was a significant difference between students who answered “yes” and students who answered “no” for the PCT scale ( $U=5240.50$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

## Discussion

In this study, the average score of the students was 73.54. Considering that the highest score value can be obtained from the scale is 98, the average score obtained shows that the students have high levels of psychological commitment and the hypothesis is accepted. Some factors, such as the opportunities of the students, their financial situation, the city they live in etc. may affect this score. In a similar study, Giray and Salman (2008) reported that the average score of the psychological commitment of Fenerbahce fans was extremely high. In the study conducted by Sari et al (2011), PCT total score average was found as 73.39.

There was no significant difference between females and males for the PCT scale (Table 2). However, when the rank averages of the groups were taken into consideration, it was found that males had higher PCT scores than females. In previous studies (Giray and Salman, 2008; Sarı et al., 2011), a significant difference was found between gender variable and psychological commitment to team, and in both studies, it was detected that males had a higher psychological commitment to team. The fact that males have high psychological commitment to the team also supports this study.

There was no significant difference between the scores of the PCT scale and age groups (Table 3). Similarly, in the study conducted by Sarı et al. (2011), no significant difference was found between age and psychological commitment to team. However, Giray and Salman (2008) found a significant

difference between age and psychological commitment to team, and it was stated that psychological commitment to team of those aged “18 years and under” and the age of “50 years and above” were more intense. But, in this study, it was found that those who were “21-25 years old” and “20 years old and below” had higher psychological commitment to the team. With regards to this result, it can be observed that many people are fan of a sports team since young ages and it can be said that being a team’s fan is not easily changed. Therefore, it can be said that psychological commitment to the team occurs in the early ages and the age variable does not differentiate this situation.

There was significant difference between the scores of the PCT scale and departments (Table 4). When the rank averages of the groups were taken into consideration, it was seen that the Physical Education and Sports students had the highest score, followed by the students in the Recreation, Coaching Education and Sports Management departments. In other words, Sports Management students’ psychological commitment to team was found to be lower than Physical Education and Sports and Recreation students. However, it was an interesting result that the test scores of the students of Coaching Education were low. This result may be due to the fact that the students who will become coaches may tend to think more objective because after they graduate they will work in sports teams as a coach.

There was a significant difference between students who bought licensed products (yes) and students who did not buy licensed products (no) for the PCT scale (Table 5). In other words, it can be said that the students who buy the licensed products of the sports team have a higher psychological commitment to their teams. The awareness that people who buy licensed products feel more connected to their teams, and perhaps support their clubs, also increases their psychological commitment levels.

There was a significant difference between the years of being a fan and the scores of the PCT scale (Table 6). This result showed that the years of being a fan have different effects on psychological commitment of students. In this study, PCT test scores of students who were “less than 1 year” and “between 1-5 years” were found low. In other words, as the years of being a fan increases, psychological commitment to team also increases. According to the findings of this study, it was determined that there were students who had a team for less than 1 year. This may be an indication that they are not related to any sports team. Perhaps, they may not also enjoy the situations of “the crowd factor and the herd instinct” as indicated by Kuru (2009).

There was a significant difference between the students who answered “yes” and “no” to the situation of the first goal of work after the graduation. When the rank averages of the groups were taken into consideration, it was seen that students who answered “yes” have higher PCT scores than the ones who answered “no” (Table 7). Interestingly, 169 students who participated in the study did not think of the sports club which they are a fan as the first goal to work. The scores of these students were lower than the 73 students who wanted to work in the club as their first goal. Therefore, it is an expected result that students who answered “yes” to the question have a higher psychological commitment to their sports team.

According to try all the possibilities to work in the sports club, there was a significant difference between the students who answered “yes” and the students who answered “no” for the PCT scale. In Table 8 was seen that 124 students who answered “yes” have higher PCT scores than the ones who answered “no”.

Students want to try all the facil to work in the team they support is a situation that contradicts the results obtained above in terms of the number of students. However, it can be interpreted that the students want to do their best to get a job in the conditions of finding one.

## Conclusion

In this research, the psychological commitment to sports team of the students studying at the Faculty of Sport Sciences of a state university in Turkey was examined. According to the findings obtained through the analysis while hypothesis 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 are accepted; 2 and 3 are rejected. The results suggest that psychological commitment to the team a student is fan of varies in terms of the department s/he studies at, buying licensed production, how long s/he is a fan of the team, whether s/he has a goal to work in the team and s/he tries all the opportunities. However, it is found that age and gender variables do not make any difference on psychological commitment.

As a result, it can be expressed that students in the Faculty of Sport Sciences have high psychological commitment to the team they are fan of, age and gender variables do not differentiate the scores students get from the scale, variables such as; buying licensed products, the years of being a fan, having a goal to work in the team and trying all the possibilities have different results on psychological commitment.

Besides, it can also be expressed that students studying in a department related with sports have a desire to work for the team they are fan of and those students also have high psychological commitment to their teams. It is thought that may be it can be very useful in terms of productivity for sport clubs to consider this information when hiring. That sport clubs hire students graduated from Faculty of Sport sciences, may result with hiring personnels wholeheartedly committed to them. Thus, students graduating from the Faculty of Sport Sciences will now have to work in a different field. It is believed that findings of the study will lead to many new researches.

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