

An Examination of the Relationship Between University Students' Athlete Identity and Social Media Addiction

Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Sporcu Kimliği Ve Sosyal Medya Bağımlılığı Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi

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Abstract

This study was conducted using a descriptive relational survey model to examine the relationship between university students' athlete identity and social media addiction. The sample group comprised 140 athlete students (55 female, 85 male) studying at the Faculty of Sports Sciences of Trabzon University. Data were collected using the 7-item Athlete Identity Scale developed by Brewer and Cornelius (2001) and the 7-item Social Media Addiction Scale developed by Günüş (2009) and validated by Çömlekçi and Başol (2019). The findings revealed that analyses based on variables such as demographic characteristics, years of sports participation, preferred type of sport, and the social media platforms used to follow news indicated positive and significant relationships among the components of athlete identity (social identity, sport-restrictedness, and negative affectivity). However, no overall significant relationship was found between social media addiction and these components. Statistical analyses showed no significant differences according to variables such as gender, academic department, type of sport, and duration of social media use, except for low-level positive relationships in certain subdimensions. In conclusion, while the study presents results that are consistent with the current literature, it also suggests that athlete identity and social media addiction should be considered as separate psychological constructs. This highlights the necessity for further comprehensive research to examine the determinant factors of both constructs and their relationships with demographic variables across different sample groups and cultural contexts.

Keywords Athlete Identity, Social Media, Student.

Öz

Bu çalışma, üniversite öğrencilerinin sporcu kimliği ile sosyal medya bağımlılığı arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek amacıyla betimsel ilişki tarama modeli kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma grubu, Trabzon Üniversitesi Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi'nde eğitim gören 140 sporcu öğrenciden (55 kadın, 85 erkek) oluşmaktadır. Veri toplamada, Brewer ve Cornelius (2001) tarafından geliştirilen 7 maddelik Sporcu Kimliği Ölçeği ile Günüş (2009) tarafından geliştirilen ve Çömlekçi ile Başol (2019) tarafından geçerlik ve güvenilirliği çalışılmış 7 maddelik Sosyal Medya Bağımlılığı Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, katılımcıların demografik özellikleri, spor yapma yılı, tercih ettikleri spor türü ve haberleri takip ettikleri sosyal medya platformları gibi değişkenler üzerinden yapılan analizlerde sporcu kimliği bileşenleri arasında (sosyal kimlik, sporla sınırlanmışlık, olumsuz duyusallık) pozitif ve anlamlı ilişkilerin bulunduğunu, ancak sosyal medya bağımlılığı ile bu bileşenler arasında genel olarak anlamlı bir ilişki tespit edilemediğini ortaya koymuştur. İstatistiksel analizlerde cinsiyet, bölüm, spor yapma türü ve sosyal medya kullanımı süresi gibi değişkenlere göre anlamlı farklılıklar bulunmamış olup yalnızca belirli alt boyutlarda düşük düzeyde pozitif ilişkiler tespit edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, çalışma mevcut literatürle uyumlu sonuçlar sunmakla birlikte, sporcu kimliği ve sosyal medya bağımlılığının ayrı psikolojik süreçler olarak değerlendirilmesi gerektiğine işaret etmektedir. Bu durum, her iki yapının belirleyici faktörlerinin ve demografik değişkenlerle ilişkilerinin, farklı örneklem grupları ve kültürel boyutlarda yapılacak daha kapsamlı araştırmalarla daha ayrıntılı incelenmesinin gerekliliğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler Sporcu Kimliği, Sosyal Medya, Öğrenci.

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Introduction

With the advancement of technology, mass communication tools have also begun to evolve and now appear in many different dimensions (Çakır et al., 2022; Uluca et al., 2024). When examining the developmental process of the Internet, the Web 1.0 era refers to the period when the Internet first emerged, during which users were passive consumers. In this period, only two roles existed—content publishers and content readers (Yeşim, 2017, p. 7)—and all authority resided with the website founder, with users being permitted only to read (Ergenç, 2011). Unlike today's vibrant Internet, Web 1.0 did not allow users to comment on websites, express their opinions, or engage in information exchange (Horzum, 2010). With the advent of the Web 2.0 era, individuals began to create content, share it with others, and comment on it. Consequently, users started to assume active roles not only as consumers but also as producers. Along with this development, numerous applications—such as social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, Google, Instagram, Skype, Wikipedia)—became available (Yeşim, 2017, p. 7). The widespread adoption of the Internet and Web 2.0 technology has made social media the focal point of public interest. Social media platforms have become an indispensable part of modern life by attracting the attention of individuals from all segments, non-governmental organizations, activists, communication institutions, and state agencies (Shirky, 2011, p. 1; Ceyhan & Çakır, 2021). Although social media and Web 2.0 are sometimes used interchangeably due to their intertwined development, it is more appropriate to refer to Web 2.0 for online technologies and social media for the social aspects of these technologies (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008, p. 232).

A new communication network, which we call social media, has emerged. In general, social media is defined as an environment or medium for social interaction. In other words, the concept of social media is described as online tools that enable users to share and interact based on their opinions, information, and interests (Özel, 2011).

Social media is characterized as web-based applications where individuals create personal profiles, engage in reciprocal communication and interaction with other social media users, increase their sharing with others who share common interests, and compile lists of friends with whom they wish to communicate (Boyd, 2003; Vural & Bat, 2010). According to Toprak et al. (2009), social sharing platforms serve as mediators that enhance individuals' status and reputation through self-created profiles, allow users to observe the connections of other users, and facilitate interpersonal communication. Social media platforms provide online applications that offer opportunities for self-presentation, establishing networks on social platforms, maintaining communication with other user groups (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007), sharing content (e.g., photos, videos) (Kim, Jeong & Lee, 2010), creating profiles that include personal information, photos, and videos, and forming new friendships as well as communicating with previously unknown individuals (Wang et al., 2010). Preeti (2009) defines the term "social network" as the formation of online communities that allow people gathered around a common purpose to share their ideas and interact with each other. According to Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011), the fundamental characteristics of social media can be expressed as identity, conversation, sharing, location, relationships, reputation, and groups. In this context: Identity refers to how and to what extent individuals present themselves on social networking sites, with users sharing details such as name, age, gender, occupation, relevant fields, and preferences in their personal profiles. Conversation denotes the communication established among users within social media applications. Sharing pertains to the dissemination of content such as images, videos, photos, and ideas on social media platforms. Location refers to

the practice of social media users sharing their whereabouts with others and accessing location-based services. Relationships represent the forms of connections that users establish with each other on a platform. Reputation reflects the credibility of social media users, often indicated by follower counts or the number of likes, serving as a marker of their social standing. Groups describe the capability of users to form groups or subgroups within their social media networks.

Excessive use of these networks can adversely affect users' daily lives in various ways, potentially leading to behavioral addiction—a significant long-term consequence. The concept of addiction is described as a pathological behavior that disrupts an individual's mental, physical, and social well-being, resulting in negative outcomes (Campbell, 2003; Coşkuntürk, et al., 2023).

Addiction is a particular state and type of relationship that develops following an interaction with a specific object or situation, encompassing a set of interconnected behaviors. In other words, addiction is characterized by an individual's reliance on a particular substance, product, or service to achieve a sense of well-being (Babaoğlu, 1997, p. 150). Generally, addiction is understood as a physical attachment to a substance (Holden, 2001). In a broader sense, addiction is the difficulty in controlling one's impulses to initiate or cease a behavior, stemming from habituation to a substance that triggers emotional, mental, or physiological responses (Byun et al., 2009). Addictions can be broadly classified into substance addictions and behavioral addictions, with technological addictions falling into the latter category (Griffiths, 1995). Symptoms of Internet addiction include excessive and problematic Internet use, spending most of one's time online, an uncontrollable desire to remain connected, feelings of dissatisfaction when not online, heightened irritability and aggression, and social as well as familial disconnection due to excessive online activity (Arisoy, 2009).

Social media addiction, on the other hand, can be defined as a communicative disorder that evolves alongside issues in cognitive, affective, behavioral, and communicative domains, ultimately affecting all aspects of an individual's life. It leads to communication problems, feelings of loneliness, anti-social behavior, and various behavioral issues (Ünlü, 2018). Social media addiction is the term used when an individual spends an excessively increasing amount of time on social media, to the extent that it negatively impacts other aspects of daily life (Durar, 2018). Another definition posits that social media addiction is “a psychological problem that develops through cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes, leading to issues such as preoccupation, impaired emotional regulation, repetitive behaviors, and conflicts across personal, work/academic, and social domains” (Tutkun-Ünal, 2015, p. 93). According to Savcı and Aysan (2017), social media addiction is defined as “excessive use, inability to satisfy the desire for use, neglect of other activities due to excessive use, damage to social relationships, use as an escape from negative emotions and life stress, difficulties in reducing or stopping use, becoming tense and irritable when use is not possible, and dishonesty regarding the duration and amount of use.”

An athlete's positive sporting life and the support received from other members of their social environment play a crucial role in developing a strong athlete identity. Athlete identity, which affects various socio-psychological behaviors, is a significant cognitive force that guides the individual. Possessing a strong athlete identity has considerable implications for one's life and profoundly influences the interpretation of psychological, social, and behavioral phenomena as well as value orientations.

This study aims to investigate the role of individuals with an athlete identity in examining the relationship between sports activities—known to help control negative

behaviors and foster numerous positive behavioral traits—and social media addiction. It is anticipated that the findings will offer valuable insights for both individual and public health protection and sustainability, enabling individuals to take precautionary measures against behavioral situations that may lead to adverse psychological and physiological outcomes, such as addiction. Moreover, given that the literature review reveals no prior study addressing athlete identity and social media addiction simultaneously, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

Materials and Methods

Research Model

This research is a descriptive study that aims to ascertain the current state. The study was conducted using a quantitative, descriptive relational survey model to examine the relationship between university students' athlete identity and social media addiction.

Research Group/Population and Sample

The research group comprised 140 athlete students (55 females, 85 males) studying at the Faculty of Sports Sciences of Trabzon University. Among these students, 3 were enrolled in the Department of Coaching Education, 49 in the Department of Physical Education and Sports Teaching, 1 in the Recreation Department, and 87 in the Department of Sports Management.

Data Collection Tools:

Athlete Identity Scale

The original scale was developed by Brewer and Cornelius (2001) to determine individuals' levels of athleticism and consists of 7 items. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was carried out by Öztürk and Koca (2013). The subdimensions of the scale have internal consistency coefficients ranging from .66 to .88. The scale comprises three subdimensions: Social Identity, Sport-Restrictedness, and Negative Affectivity. The social identity subdimension measures the extent to which an individual perceives themselves in terms of social athlete roles. The sport-restrictedness subdimension aims to assess the level of self-worth that emerges from participation in the athlete role, while the negative affectivity subdimension targets the degree of negative emotions experienced by the individual in undesirable sporting situations. Additionally, the total score obtained from the scale reflects the strength of the athlete identity; higher scores indicate a stronger athlete identity. The scale employs a seven-point Likert format (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree), and participants are asked to evaluate each item accordingly. High scores on the scale indicate a high level of athlete identity. Brewer and Cornelius (2001) reported the original scale's internal consistency coefficient as .81, a correlation of .96 for the initial 10-item version, and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .89 over a one-week interval.

Social Media Addiction Scale

The Social Media Addiction Scale, developed by Günüç (2009) and subsequently subjected to validity and reliability studies by Çömlekçi and Başol (2019), consists of 7 items. The items on the scale are evaluated using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Never; 5 = Always). For the evaluation of the scale, the mean of the item scores is calculated, with higher average scores representing higher levels of social media addiction. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of the scale was found to be 0.781.

During the data collection process, prior to using the scales related to the variables of interest in the study, necessary permissions were obtained via email from the researchers who developed or adapted the scales through the communication addresses provided on TOAD.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Correlation Analysis Examining the Relationship between Participants' Ages and the Athlete Identity Scale and Social Media Addiction Scale

Variable	n	r	p
Social Identity	140	-0.041	0.630
Sport-Restrictedness	140	0.045	0.600
Negative Affectivity	140	-0.178*	0.036
Athlete Identity Scale	140	-0.062	0.465
Social Media Addiction Scale	140	0.206*	0.015

* (p < 0.05).

There was no significant relationship between participants' age and social identity (p > .05), sport-restrictedness (p > .05), or the overall athlete identity scale (p > .05). However, a low-level negative relationship was found with negative affectivity (p < .05, r = -0.178*) and a low-level positive relationship with the social media addiction scale (p < .05, r = 0.206*).

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U Test Results of Athlete Identity Scale Scores According to Participants' Gender

Subdimension	Group	n	Mean Rank	Rank Sum	U	p
Social Identity	Women	55	68.16	3749.00	2209.000	0.581
	Men	85	72.01	6121.00		
Sport-Restrictedness	Women	55	64.37	3540.50	2000.500	0.146
	Men	85	74.46	6329.50		
Negative Affectivity	Women	55	64.72	3559.50	2019.500	0.167
	Men	85	74.24	6310.50		
Overall Athlete Identity	Women	55	66.27	3465.00	2105.000	0.320
	Men	85	73.24	6225.00		

* (p < 0.05).

Based on Table 2, no statistically significant differences were observed in the subdimensions of social identity (U = 2209.000), sport-restrictedness (U = 2000.500), and negative affectivity (U = 2019.500), nor in the overall athlete identity scale (U = 2105.000) (p > .05).

Table 3. T-Test Results of Social Media Addiction Scale Scores According to Participants' Gender

Measure	Gender	n	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Social Media Addiction Scale	Women	55	13.03	5.29	1.221	138	0.149
	Men	85	12.00	4.63			
	Total	140					

* ($p < 0.05$).

Based on Table 3, the analysis revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in Social Media Addiction Scale scores between genders ($p > .05$).

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U Test Results of Sport Identity Scale Scores by Type of Sport Participation

Subdimension	Group	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Social Identity	Individual Sport	52	72.74	3782.50	2171.50	0.613
	Team Sport	88	69.18	6087.50	–	–
	Total	140	–	–	–	–
Sport-Related Restriction	Individual Sport	52	73.08	3800.00	2154.00	0.559
	Team Sport	88	68.98	6070.00	–	–
	Total	140	–	–	–	–
Negative Affectivity	Individual Sport	52	64.50	3354.00	1976.00	0.170
	Team Sport	88	74.05	6516.00	–	–
	Total	140	–	–	–	–
Athlete Identity Scale	Individual Sport	52	72.48	3769.00	2185.00	0.656
	Team Sport	88	69.33	6101.00	–	–
	Total	140	–	–	–	–

* ($p < 0.05$).

Upon examination of Table 4, no statistically significant differences were observed in the subdimensions of Social Identity ($U = 2171.500$), Sport-Related Restriction ($U = 2154.000$), and Negative Affectivity ($U = 1976.000$), as well as in the overall Athlete Identity Scale score ($U = 2185.000$) ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5. T-test Results of Social Media Addiction Scale Scores by Type of Sport Participation

Scale	Group	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	df	p
Social Media Addiction Scale	Individual Sport	52	12.51	4.79	0.207	138	0.395
	Team Sport	88	12.34	5.00			
	Total	140	–	–			

* ($p < 0.05$).

Upon examination of the analysis results, no statistically significant differences were found ($p > 0.05$).

Table 6. Correlation Analysis Examining the Relationship Between Years of Sport Participation and the Athlete Identity Scale and Social Media Addiction Scale

Variable	n	r	p
Social Identity	140	0.213*	0.011
Sport-Related Restriction	140	0.233**	0.006
Negative Affectivity	140	0.072	0.399
Athlete Identity Scale	140	0.210*	0.013
Social Media Addiction Scale	140	-0.115	0.671

* ($p < 0.05$).

According to the analysis, there is no significant relationship between years of sport participation and Negative Affectivity ($p > .05$) or Social Media Addiction Scale scores ($p > .05$). Conversely, a low-level positive relationship was observed between years of sport participation and Social Identity ($p < .05$, $r = 0.213^*$), Sport-Related Restriction ($p < .05$, $r = 0.233^{**}$), and overall Athlete Identity Scale scores ($p < .05$, $r = 0.210^*$).

Table 7. Kruskal-Wallis H Test Results of Athlete Identity Scale Scores by the Social Media Platform Used for Following News

Subdimension	Groups	n	Mean Rank	SD	X ²	p
Social Identity	Instagram	92	71.89	3	3.150	0.369
	Twitter	40	71.72	–		
	Facebook	3	62.67	–		
	News Websites	5	39.90	–		
	Total	140	–	–		
Sport-Related Restriction	Instagram	92	71.27	3	4.142	0.247
	Twitter	40	73.69	–		
	Facebook	3	29.33	–		
	News Websites	5	55.60	–		
	Total	140	–	–		
Negative Affectivity	Instagram	92	68.78	3	4.036	0.258
	Twitter	40	78.11	–		
	Facebook	3	67.67	–		
	News Websites	5	43.00	–		
	Total	140	–	–		
Athlete Identity Scale	Instagram	92	70.96	3	4.037	0.257
	Twitter	40	74.70	–		
	Facebook	3	52.67	–		
	News Websites	5	39.10	–		
	Total	140	–	–		

* (p < 0.05).

Based on Table 7, no statistically significant differences were observed across the subdimensions or the overall scale (p > .05).

Table 8. One-Way ANOVA Test Results of Social Media Addiction Scale Scores by the Social Media Platform Used for Following News

News-Followed Social Media	n	Mean	SD	F	p
Instagram	92	12.79	5.17	1.449	0.21
Twitter	40	11.37	3.92		
Facebook	3	10.00	3.60		
News Websites	5	15.00	6.67		
Total	140	12.40	4.91		

* (p < 0.05).

Based on Table 8, no statistically significant differences were found in the Social Media Addiction Scale scores with respect to the section variable [F(3, 136) = 1.449, p > .05].

Table 9. Correlation Analysis Examining the Relationship Between Time Spent on Social Media and the Athlete Identity Scale and Social Media Addiction Scale

Variable	n	r	p
Social Identity	140	-0.092	0.278
Sport-Related Restriction	140	-0.053	0.535
Negative Affectivity	140	0.102	0.232
Athlete Identity Scale	140	-0.028	0.739
Social Media Addiction Scale	140	0.204*	0.016

* (p < 0.05).

It was determined that there is no significant relationship between the time spent on social media and Social Identity (p > .05), Sport-Related Restriction (p > .05), Negative

Affectivity ($p > .05$), or overall Athlete Identity Scale scores. However, a low-level positive relationship was found between the time spent on social media and Social Media Addiction Scale scores ($p < .05$, $r = 0.204^*$).

Table 10. Kruskal–Wallis H Test Results of Athlete Identity Scale Scores by Preferred Social Media Platform

Subdimension	Group	n	Mean Rank	SD	X ²	p
Social Identity	Instagram	107	70.35	4	1.098	0.895
	Twitter	20	69.90	–		
	Facebook	1	48.50	–		
	Youtube	9	80.17	–		
	Other	3	59.33	–		
	Total	140	–	–		
Sport-Related Restriction	Instagram	107	70.67	4	3.018	0.555
	Twitter	20	72.08	–		
	Facebook	1	24.50	–		
	Youtube	9	78.83	–		
	Other	3	44.33	–		
	Total	140	–	–		
Negative Affectivity	Instagram	107	70.59	4	1.136	0.889
	Twitter	20	73.80	–		
	Facebook	1	39.00	–		
	Youtube	9	70.22	–		
	Other	3	56.50	–		
	Total	140	–	–		
Athlete Identity Scale	Instagram	107	70.93	4	1.193	0.879
	Twitter	20	71.80	–		
	Facebook	1	37.50	–		
	Youtube	9	71.56	–		
	Other	3	54.17	–		
	Total	140	–	–		

* ($p < 0.05$).

Based on Table 10, no statistically significant differences were observed across the subdimensions or the overall scale ($p > .05$).

Table 11. One-Way ANOVA Test Results of Social Media Addiction Scale Scores by Preferred Social Media Platform

Preferred Social Media	n	Mean	SD	F	p
Instagram	107	12.63	5.09	0.535	0.71
Twitter	20	11.75	4.29		
Facebook	1	14.00	–		
Youtube	9	12.11	5.03		
Other	3	9.00	1.00		
Total	140	12.40	4.91		

* ($p < 0.05$).

Based on Table 11, no statistically significant difference was found in the Social Media Addiction Scale scores with respect to the preferred social media platform [$F(4, 135) = 0.535$, $p > .05$].

Table 12. Examination of the Relationship Between the Athlete Identity Scale and the Social Media Scale

	Social Identity	Sport-Related Restriction	Negative Affectivity	Athlete Identity Scale (AIS)	Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS)
Social Identity	1	0.710**	0.532**	0.909**	0.036
Sport-Related Restriction	0.710**	1	0.477**	0.863**	0.064

	Social Identity	Sport-Related Restriction	Negative Affectivity	Athlete Identity Scale (AIS)	Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS)
Negative Affectivity	0.532**	0.477**	1	0.761**	-0.067
Athlete Identity Scale (AIS)	0.909**	0.863**	0.761**	1	-0.012
Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS)	0.036	0.064	-0.067	-0.012	1

The correlation analyses conducted in the study revealed the following results:

A strong, positive, and significant relationship was found between Social Identity and Sport-Related Restriction ($r = 0.710$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, Social Identity was positively and significantly correlated with Negative Affectivity ($r = 0.532$, $p < 0.01$).

Social Identity exhibited a very strong positive relationship with the Athlete Identity Scale (AIS) ($r = 0.909$, $p < 0.01$), whereas no significant relationship was detected between Social Identity and the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) ($r = 0.036$, $p > 0.05$), indicating that these two variables are not related.

Additionally, a positive and significant relationship was observed between Sport-Related Restriction and Negative Affectivity ($r = 0.477$, $p < 0.01$), along with a very strong positive correlation between Sport-Related Restriction and AIS ($r = 0.863$, $p < 0.01$). However, no significant relationship was reported between Sport-Related Restriction and SMAS ($r = 0.064$, $p > 0.05$).

Moreover, Negative Affectivity was positively and significantly correlated with AIS ($r = 0.761$, $p < 0.01$), while it exhibited a negative but non-significant relationship with SMAS ($r = -0.067$, $p > 0.05$).

Lastly, no significant relationship was found between AIS and SMAS ($r = -0.012$, $p > 0.05$).

In summary, while the components of athlete identity (i.e., Social Identity, Sport-Related Restriction, and Negative Affectivity) generally show positive and significant interrelationships, no significant associations were identified between these components and the Social Media Addiction Scale.

In conclusion, the findings of the study revealed that analyses conducted on variables such as participants' demographic characteristics, years of sports participation, preferred sports types, and the social media platforms through which they follow news showed positive and significant relationships among the components of athlete identity (social identity, sport-limitedness, and negative affectivity). However, in general, no significant relationship was detected between these components and social media addiction. The statistical analyses did not reveal significant differences based on variables such as gender, department, type of sports participation, and duration of social media use, with only low-level positive relationships observed in certain sub-dimensions. Overall, while the study's findings are consistent with the existing literature, they indicate that athlete identity and social media addiction should be considered as separate psychological processes.

Discussion

According to the findings of the study, it was determined that there is no significant relationship between age and athlete identity or social media addiction. This suggests that these variables do not appear to be related to the participants' age, implying that both athlete identity and social media use may develop independently of age. However, a low-level positive relationship ($r = .206$) was found between negative affectivity and social media addiction, which can be interpreted as indicating that individuals experiencing negative emotional states may tend to use social media more frequently. In

particular, it is conceivable that increased negative emotions trigger the search for emotional support or relief through social media. A review of the literature reveals similar findings. For instance, Iwamoto and Chun (2020) reported a significant relationship between increased social media use and heightened levels of anxiety and stress, with higher social media usage being associated with elevated anxiety and stress levels. These findings suggest that while social media use may have significant effects on psychological states, it may serve as a means of emotional relief or escape particularly among individuals experiencing negative emotional conditions.

In the study findings, no significant difference was found in the athlete identity scales based on the gender variable. The absence of a significant difference in the gender-based athlete identity scale can be interpreted as suggesting that gender does not—or only minimally—affects athlete identity among athletes. Some results in the literature align with these findings, while others do not. For example, Rajan and Varma (2022) reported that there were significant differences in athlete identity scores between females and males, with male athletes scoring higher than females in terms of social identity (Rajan & Varma, 2022). Additionally, a meta-analysis by Lochbaum et al. (2022) revealed that athlete identity may vary according to gender. Moreover, a study on Italian university student athletes examined the differences between athlete identity and variables such as gender, age, sport type, and competition level, and found significant differences based on gender (Lupo et al., 2017). These divergent findings in the literature suggest that the effect of gender on athlete identity may depend on the context and the specific characteristics being examined. Therefore, when assessing gender differences in athlete identity, it is important to consider factors such as the type of sport, the cultural context of the participants, and the social expectations placed on athletes.

The study found that there was no significant difference in social media addiction scale scores based on gender. This result can be interpreted as suggesting that gender does not have a significant impact on social media addiction. The literature, however, presents mixed findings on the effects of gender on social media use and addiction. For instance, a study by Alessandro Quagliari et al. (2024) found that males are more prone to internet and gaming addiction, whereas females tend to exhibit more behaviors associated with social media addiction (Quagliari et al., 2024). Similarly, a study conducted by Maria Choudhury and colleagues (2020) on social media addiction among young people revealed significant differences in social media usage between genders, with females showing higher rates of addiction compared to males (Choudhury & Ali, 2020). These contradictory findings suggest that social media addiction and usage may vary depending on cultural and individual differences.

In the study's findings, no significant differences were observed in the Athlete Identity Scale and Social Media Addiction Scale scores based on the department and type of sport variables. This may be interpreted as indicating that the effects of these variables are limited. In the literature, there are studies whose results both align with and contradict these findings, suggesting that the impact of these variables may depend on additional contextual or methodological factors.

Studies examining differences in athlete identity across different types of sports have generally focused on the extent to which athletes define themselves as athletes and the psychological dimensions of sports. Such studies evaluate how athletes participating in various sports perceive themselves and relate this to their athlete identity (Lochbaum et al., 2022). Additionally, research investigating differences in athlete identity across academic departments exists, typically addressing the relationships between athlete identity, academic success, or department preferences (Kimball, 2007). Regarding social

media addiction, studies that explore whether significant differences exist across different sports types or academic departments tend to be more common among young adults. These studies have assessed the role of demographic variables in social media usage habits and addiction levels, reporting that no significant differences were detected (Choudhury & Ali, 2020). In light of these findings, it can be argued that when evaluating research on athlete identity and social media addiction, it is necessary to consider not only the demographic characteristics of participants but also the cultural and social factors.

In the current study, it was found that while no significant relationship emerged between years of sports participation and negative affectivity or social media addiction scores, low-level positive relationships were observed between years of sports participation and social identity, sport-limitedness, and overall athlete identity scores. This finding suggests that long-term engagement in sports may enhance an athlete's sense of belonging and identification with their sport. Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993), who developed the Athlete Identity Scale, argued that the core components of athlete identity are strengthened in proportion to the individual's commitment to sport. However, it has also been reported that negative affectivity does not necessarily increase with longer sports participation. Similarly, Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer (1996) found that while extended sports experience reinforces overall athlete identity, it is not directly linked to negative emotional responses. Moreover, Lochbaum, Cooper, and Limp (2022) reported that increased commitment to sports leads to enhancements in the dimensions of athlete identity, although these associations are generally small to moderate in magnitude. These findings support the observed low-level positive relationships between years of sports participation and the athlete identity sub-dimensions in the current study. Additionally, Kuss and Griffiths (2017) demonstrated that social media addiction is not significantly related to the duration of sports participation, suggesting that social media addiction is more strongly influenced by individual psychological and social factors, independent of the time spent in sports. Therefore, the absence of a significant relationship between years of sports participation and social media addiction scores in the current study is consistent with these literature findings.

In the current study, no significant differences were observed in the subdimensions of the Athlete Identity Scale, overall athlete identity scores, or Social Media Addiction Scale scores based on the social media platform used for following news. This finding can be interpreted to mean that the choice of social media platform does not play a crucial role in determining the extent to which an athlete identifies as such or in influencing tendencies toward social media addiction. According to the "differential susceptibility model" proposed by Valkenburg and Peter (2013), while the unique features of various social media platforms may shape user behavior, these differences are not expected to exert a pronounced impact on individuals' core identity structures or addiction levels (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013). Furthermore, no significant relationship was found between the time spent on social media and the sub-dimensions of the Athlete Identity Scale (social identity, sport-limitedness, negative affectivity); however, a low-level positive relationship was observed between the time spent on social media and social media addiction scores. This suggests that the amount of time an athlete spends on social media does not directly affect the processes of developing an athlete identity but may serve as a risk factor for social media addiction. In line with these findings, Kuss and Griffiths (2017) reported that while increased time on social media is associated with higher levels of addiction, the effect size is generally small. Similarly, studies by Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993) and Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer (1996) have indicated that athlete identity is more closely related to direct participation in sports and the

nature of that participation, rather than the amount of time spent on social media. These findings imply that while athlete identity is shaped primarily by factors such as sports participation, experience, and intrinsic identification with the sport, social media addiction is influenced by factors like usage duration. Therefore, specific purposes for using social media, such as following news, do not appear to generate overall differences in either athlete identity or social media addiction.

In the present study, no statistically significant differences were observed in the sub-dimensions and overall score of the Athlete Identity Scale or in the Social Media Addiction Scale scores based on the participants' preferred social media platform. This result can be interpreted as indicating that the choice of social media platform does not play a decisive role in the formation of fundamental psychological constructs such as athlete identity or social media addiction. According to the "differential susceptibility model" proposed by Valkenburg and Peter (2013), although the features offered by various social media platforms may influence individual behaviors, platform preference is insufficient to reflect deep-seated identity structures. In addition, significant relationships were found between the time spent on social media and the sub-dimensions of the Athlete Identity Scale (social identity, sport-limitedness, and negative affectivity) as well as the overall athlete identity score; these relationships were low-level and positive. This finding suggests that long-term participation in sports may enhance an athlete's sense of belonging and strengthen these identity components. Indeed, studies by Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993) and Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer (1996) have demonstrated that the sub-dimensions of athlete identity are positively and supportively interrelated, indicating that an individual's identification with their sport may be associated with the simultaneous development of these components. Furthermore, a low-level positive relationship was observed between the time spent on social media and the Social Media Addiction Scale scores. In a study by Kuss and Griffiths (2017), it was reported that increased time on social media leads to slight increases in social media addiction levels, although the magnitude of this effect is generally limited. This finding may be interpreted as suggesting that social media addiction is not directly related to sports participation or athlete identity.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Overall, the findings of the present study appear to be consistent with those in the existing academic literature. In addition, research findings that do not fully align with the literature may indicate that athlete identity and social media addiction should be considered as distinct psychological processes. It is also suggested that examining the determining factors of both constructs and their relationships with various demographic variables across different sample groups and cultural contexts would further contribute to the literature.

Beyanlar / Declarations

Etik Onay ve Katılım Onayı / Ethics approval and consent to participate

Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma ve yazım sürecinde "Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi" kapsamında bilimsel, etik ve alıntı kurallarına uyulmuş olup; toplanan veriler üzerinde herhangi bir tahrifat yapılmamış ve bu çalışma herhangi başka bir akademik yayın ortamına değerlendirme için gönderilmemiştir. Makale ile ilgili doğabilecek her türlü ihlallerde sorumluluk yazara aittir. Bu araştırma Trabzon Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kurulu tarafından 08.07.2024 tarihli ve E-81614018-050.04-2400033451 sayılı karar ile gerekli izinler alınmıştır.

During the preparation and writing of this study, the principles of scientific integrity, ethics, and citation, as stipulated in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive," were fully observed; no falsification was made on the collected data, and this study has not been submitted to any other academic publication platform for evaluation. The author bears full responsibility for any potential violations regarding the article. This research was approved by the Trabzon University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the decision dated 08.07.2024 and numbered E-81614018-050.04-2400033451.

Veri Ve Materyal Erişilebilirliği / Availability of data and material

Bu çalışmanın bulgularını destekleyen veriler, makul talepler üzerine sorumlu yazardan temin edilebilir. Veri seti yalnızca akademik amaçlar için erişilebilir olacak ve verilerin herhangi bir kullanımı, orijinal çalışmayı referans gösterecek ve katılımcıların gizliliğini koruyacaktır.

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The dataset will be accessible only for academic purposes, and any use of the data will recognize the original study and maintain the confidentiality of the participants.

Çıkar Çatışması / Competing interests

Yazarlar, bu makalede sunulan çalışmayı etkileyebilecek herhangi bir çıkar çatışması veya kişisel ilişkiye sahip olmadıklarını beyan etmektedirler.

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Yazar Katkıları / Authors' Contribution Statement

Bu çalışmada yazarlar eşit düzeyde katkı sağlamıştır.
The authors contributed equally to this study.

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