

Taraftar Bağlılığı ile Psikolojik İyi Oluş Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi

The Relationship Between Fan Loyalty and Psychological Well-Being

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21262420>

Received / Gönderim: 20.05.2026

Accepted / Kabul: 21.06.2026

Published / Yayın: 23.06.2026

Volume 3, Issue 2, June, 2026

Cilt 3, Sayı 2, Haziran, 2026

How to Cite This Article

APA 7

Kaçay, Z. & Yılmaz, E. (2026). Taraftar Bağlılığı ile Psikolojik İyi Oluş Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi. International Journal of Health, Exercise, and Sport Sciences (IJOSS), 3(2), 858-871.
<https://www.ijoss.org/Archive/v3-i2/ijoss-Volume3-issue2-31.pdf>

Vancouver

Kaçay Z. & Yılmaz E. Taraftar Bağlılığı ile Psikolojik İyi Oluş Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi. Int J Health Exerc Sport Sci (IJOSS). 2026;3(2):858-871. Available from: <https://www.ijoss.org/Archive/v3-i2/ijoss-Volume3-issue2-31.pdf>

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, herhangi bir spor takımını destekleyen bireylerin taraftar bağlılığı düzeyleri ile psikolojik iyi oluş düzeyleri arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesidir. Araştırma nicel araştırma yaklaşımı çerçevesinde ilişkisel tarama modeline göre yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın örneklemini, kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle belirlenen 18 yaş ve üzeri 419 gönüllü katılımcı oluşturmaktadır. Veriler, Takım Sporları Taraftar Bağlılık Ölçeği ile Psikolojik İyi Oluş Ölçeği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde betimsel istatistikler, bağımsız örneklemler t-testi, tek yönlü varyans analizi, Pearson korelasyon analizi, basit doğrusal regresyon analizi ve doğrulayıcı faktör analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma bulguları, taraftar bağlılığı ile psikolojik iyi oluş arasında pozitif yönlü, düşük düzeyde ve istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir ($r=.116$, $p<.05$). Regresyon analizi sonuçlarına göre taraftar bağlılığı, psikolojik iyi oluşun anlamlı ancak sınırlı bir yordayıcısıdır ($R^2=.011$, $p<.05$). Ayrıca bazı demografik değişkenlere göre taraftar bağlılığı ve psikolojik iyi oluş puanlarında anlamlı farklılıklar tespit edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, taraftar bağlılığının psikolojik iyi oluş üzerinde olumlu fakat düşük düzeyli bir etkisinin bulunduğu söylenebilir. Bu bulgu, taraftarlığın bireylerin aidiyet duygusu ve psikososyal yaşantıları bağlamında değerlendirilmesinin önemini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Taraftar Bağlılığı, Psikolojik İyi Oluş, Spor Psikolojisi, Takım Taraftarlığı, Aidiyet.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between fan loyalty and psychological well-being among individuals who support a sports team. The research was conducted using a quantitative research approach based on the relational survey model. The sample of the study consisted of 419 voluntary participants aged 18 and above selected through a convenience sampling method. Data were collected using the Team Sports Fan Loyalty Scale and the Psychological Well-Being Scale. Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson correlation analysis, simple linear regression analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed a positive, low-level, and statistically significant relationship between fan loyalty and psychological well-being ($r = .116$, $p < .05$). According to the regression analysis results, fan loyalty was found to be a significant but limited predictor of psychological well-being ($R^2 = .011$, $p < .05$). In addition, significant differences were found in fan loyalty and psychological well-being scores according to some demographic variables. As a result, it can be concluded that fan loyalty has a positive but relatively low effect on psychological well-being. These findings highlight the importance of considering sports fandom within the context of individuals' sense of belonging and psychosocial experiences.

Keywords: Fan Loyalty, Psychological Well-Being, Sport Psychology, Team Fandom, Sense of Belonging.

<https://www.ijoss.org/Archive/v3-i2/ijoss-Volume3-issue2-31.pdf>

INTRODUCTION

Sport is a multidimensional phenomenon that influences not only individuals' physical health but also their psychological balance, social integration, and identity development. The emotional and social interaction environment provided by sport enables individuals to gather around particular athletes, clubs, or teams, thereby creating the basis for strong forms of belonging such as fandom (Ay, 2017). Particularly in team sports, fandom should not be viewed merely as a spectator behavior; rather, it represents a social and psychological process through which individuals position themselves as members of a group. In this process, individuals identify with the team they support, strengthen their social identity, and reinforce their sense of social belonging (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

The phenomenon of fandom should not be regarded solely as a temporary interest based on a team's athletic success. The bond that fans establish with their teams reflects a multidimensional structure involving emotional attachment, cognitive evaluation, and behavioral loyalty. Over time, individuals may perceive the team they support as a part of their own identity and may experience the team's successes and failures as an extension of their personal lives. In this respect, fan loyalty differs from consumer loyalty in that it involves a strong sense of identity, belonging, and continuity (Dick & Basu, 1994). In particular, the theoretical framework of sport fan loyalty developed by Mahony, Madrigal, and Howard (2000) conceptualizes fan loyalty not merely as emotional closeness, but as a multidimensional construct that includes cognitive evaluations, loyal behaviors, and a long-term tendency to support a team. More recent studies have also shown that fan loyalty maintains its multidimensional structure and continues to offer a strong explanatory framework in the context of sport consumption (Kılıçer, 2019; Yıldız, Aral, Tayartekin, Özsoy, & Qali, 2026).

However, fan loyalty does not always produce exclusively positive outcomes. In some cases, when loyalty intensifies, fanaticism, irrational attitudes, aggression, and intense emotional reactions may emerge. Such conditions may be associated with stress, tension, and various behavioral problems among individuals (Aydın & Aydın, 2026). Therefore, fan loyalty should be examined not only in terms of social belonging and group cohesion, but also in relation to its possible effects on individuals' psychological functioning. At this point, the concept of psychological well-being provides an important framework for evaluation.

Psychological well-being is generally understood as an individual's capacity to maintain a meaningful, balanced, and satisfying life (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In the literature, this concept is commonly discussed within two main approaches. The hedonic approach focuses on happiness, pleasure, and positive affect (Kabakcı & İlhan, 2019), whereas the eudaimonic approach emphasizes self-realization, purpose in life, autonomy, and personal growth (Özdemir & Çetinceli, 2023). Ryff's (1989) model of psychological well-being also explains the multidimensional nature of this concept through the dimensions of self-acceptance, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth. In addition, recent studies suggest that psychological well-being is associated not only with individual

characteristics but also with social variables such as sense of belonging, social ties, hope, community feeling, and interpersonal relationships (Keyes et al., 2002; Göçet Tekin, 2021). Recent evidence from sport fan research further indicates that team identification and psychological resources contribute positively to fan well-being (Lee et al., 2025).

Within this framework, fandom may be considered an important social experience associated with psychological well-being. Fandom does not simply provide individuals with an opportunity to support a sports team; it may also offer psychosocial gains such as identity construction, social support, emotional sharing, and community membership. According to Oyman and Başbozkurt (2021), team identification and fan identity may strengthen individuals' sense of belonging and contribute positively to psychological well-being. Similarly, fan communities are argued to provide individuals with social networks and to enhance feelings of social connectedness through shared excitement and emotional exchange (Mastromartino et al., 2020; Wann, 2015).

The possible relationship between fan loyalty and psychological well-being may be explained through several theoretical mechanisms. Based on Vallerand's (2010) dualistic model of passion, attachment to activities that occupy an important place in an individual's life may support identity integration, strengthen self-esteem, and increase positive emotions. Likewise, a strong bond with a sports team may provide individuals with identity continuity, social support, and a space for shared emotional experiences. In particular, watching matches, sharing in a team's success, and interacting with fan communities may reinforce positive experiences such as hope, joy, and belonging. This may, in turn, function as a supportive factor for life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Vallerand, 2010). Indeed, previous studies have reported positive associations between fan-related psychological attachment, fanaticism, and happiness among football supporters (Çakmak et al., 2022).

In conclusion, fandom is not merely a spectator behavior; it is a multidimensional psychosocial process that may shape individuals' identities, social relationships, and emotional experiences. Feelings of affection, belonging, and loyalty toward a club may support social integration, while interactions formed through fan communities may contribute to various dimensions of psychological well-being (Oyman & Başbozkurt, 2021; Mastromartino et al., 2020). Nevertheless, when both the positive and negative aspects of fan loyalty are considered together, it becomes important to examine empirically how this construct relates to individuals' psychological well-being. Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between fan loyalty and psychological well-being among individuals who support a sports team.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research approach and employed a relational survey model in order to examine the relationships between the variables. The relational survey model is a research design that aims to determine the direction and strength of relationships between two or more variables (Karasar, 2012). Within the scope of this

model, the relationship between sports fans' levels of fan loyalty and their levels of psychological well-being was investigated.

Participants

The population of the study consisted of fans of professional sports clubs in Türkiye. The sample included 419 voluntary participants aged 18 and above who were selected using a convenience sampling method. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and the principles of confidentiality and voluntary participation were explained to them. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection.

Data Collection Instruments

Data in this study were collected through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections.

- ***Demographic Information***

The first section included closed-ended questions designed to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants, such as gender, age, education level, income level, duration of fandom, and whether they had ever changed the team they support.

- ***Team Sports Fan Loyalty Scale (TSFLS)***

Fan loyalty was measured using the Team Sports Fan Loyalty Scale developed by Yetim, Aydoğan, and Özdemir (2023). The scale consists of 17 items and three sub-dimensions: emotional commitment, sustainability, and normative loyalty. All items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). In the original scale development study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranged between .70 and .86. In addition, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value was reported as .94, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was found to be statistically significant ($p < .001$).

- ***Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS)***

Participants' psychological well-being levels were measured using the Psychological Well-Being Scale, which is the Turkish adaptation of the Flourishing Scale originally developed by Diener et al. (2010) and adapted into Turkish by Telef (2013). The scale consists of 8 items and a single dimension. Items are rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). In the Turkish adaptation study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was reported as .80.

- ***Data Collection Procedure***

The data for the study were collected through an online survey form. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and the principles of anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were emphasized. Completing the questionnaire took approximately 10–12 minutes. The collected data were used solely for academic research purposes.

Data Analysis

The data obtained in this study were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 24.0 statistical software packages. Before conducting the main analyses, skewness and kurtosis values were examined to determine whether the data met the assumption of normal distribution. Following this preliminary assessment, several statistical analyses

were performed. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, were calculated to summarize the data. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between fan loyalty and psychological well-being. In order to determine whether fan loyalty predicted psychological well-being, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. Independent samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to examine differences in fan loyalty and psychological well-being according to demographic variables. In addition, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the construct validity of the measurement scales. In all statistical analyses, the significance level was set at $p < .05$.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

The population of the study consisted of sports fans in Türkiye. The sample size was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculation method with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The calculation indicated that at least 384 participants would be sufficient for the study. To minimize potential data loss and increase the reliability of the analysis, a larger sample was targeted, and data were collected from a total of 419 participants (Raosoft, 2024). Participants were included in the study using a convenience sampling method.

Tablo 1. The Demographic Characteristics of The Participants

Variable	Groups	n	%
Gender	Male	234	55.8
	Female	185	44.2
Age	18–25	298	71.1
	26–33	58	13.8
	34–41	45	10.7
	42+	18	4.3
Social Media Following	Every day	133	31.7
	Several times a week	109	26.0
	Several times a month	54	12.9
	Rarely	123	29.4
Total		419	100

As shown in Table 1, 55.8% of the participants were male ($n = 234$) and 44.2% were female ($n = 185$). Regarding age distribution, the majority of participants (71.1%) were between 18 and 25 years old. This group was followed by participants aged 26–33 (13.8%), 34–41 (10.7%), and 42 years and above (4.3%).

In terms of social media engagement with their supported teams, 31.7% of participants reported following their teams every day, 26.0% several times a week, 12.9% several times a month, and 29.4% rarely.

Normality and Reliability Analysis

To determine whether the data met the assumption of normal distribution, skewness and kurtosis values were examined. The results indicated that the skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable limits. Specifically, the skewness and kurtosis values for

the Psychological Well-Being Scale were -0.83 and 0.81 , respectively, while the values for the Fan Loyalty Scale were -0.07 and -0.73 .

According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), skewness and kurtosis values within the range of ± 1.5 indicate that the data are normally distributed. Therefore, the assumption of normality was considered satisfied, and parametric statistical tests were used in subsequent analyses.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of the scales used in the study.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients of the Scales

Scale	Number of Items	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
Psychological Well-Being	8	5.43	1.18	-0.83	0.81	.902
Fan Loyalty	17	2.93	1.11	-0.07	-0.73	.943

The results in Table 2 show the mean scores, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis values, and reliability coefficients of the scales. The skewness and kurtosis values fall within the acceptable range, supporting the assumption of normal distribution. Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicate high internal consistency for both scales. The Psychological Well-Being Scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of .902, while the Fan Loyalty Scale showed a reliability coefficient of .943.

Correlation and Regression Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between fan loyalty and psychological well-being. In addition, a simple linear regression analysis was performed to determine whether fan loyalty predicted psychological well-being. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis Between Variables (Pearson)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Psychological Well-Being	5.43	1.18	1	
2. Fan Loyalty	2.93	1.11	.116*	1

*Note: $n = 419$; SD = Standard Deviation; r = Pearson correlation coefficient; $p < .05$.

As shown in Table 3, there is a positive, low-level, and statistically significant relationship between psychological well-being and fan loyalty ($r = .116$, $p < .05$). This result indicates that as fan loyalty increases, psychological well-being tends to increase slightly as well.

To further examine this relationship, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression Analysis of Fan Loyalty Predicting Psychological Well-Being

Model	B	Std. Error	β	t	p
Constant	5.070	.163		31.066	.000
Fan Loyalty	.124	.052	.116	2.384	.018

$R^2 = .011$, $F = 5.686$, $p = .018$

Note: B = Unstandardized coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination.

The regression model was found to be statistically significant ($F = 5.686, p < .05$). The results indicate that fan loyalty significantly predicts psychological well-being ($\beta = .116, p < .05$). However, the explanatory power of the model is relatively limited. Fan loyalty explains approximately 1.1% of the total variance in psychological well-being ($R^2 = .011$).

Overall, these findings suggest that while fan loyalty is positively associated with psychological well-being, the magnitude of this relationship is relatively small.

Comparisons According to Demographic Variables

The analysis results comparing psychological well-being scores according to participants' demographic characteristics are presented in Table 5.

An independent samples t-test conducted according to gender showed that there was no statistically significant difference between male ($M = 5.51, SD = 1.14$) and female ($M = 5.34, SD = 1.23$) participants in terms of psychological well-being scores ($t = 1.47, p > .05$).

The results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted for age groups indicated that psychological well-being scores did not significantly differ across age groups ($F = 1.99, p > .05$).

However, the analysis conducted for the frequency of social media following revealed a statistically significant difference between groups in terms of psychological well-being scores ($F = 3.35, p < .05$). Post-hoc comparisons indicated that participants who followed their teams every day ($M = 5.66$) reported significantly higher psychological well-being scores than those who followed their teams only a few times a month ($M = 5.10$).

An independent samples t-test conducted according to team switching status demonstrated that participants who had never changed the team they support ($M = 5.48$) had significantly higher psychological well-being scores than those who had changed their team ($M = 5.13$) ($t = -2.13, p < .05$).

No statistically significant difference was observed in psychological well-being scores according to membership in a fan group ($t = 0.22, p > .05$). Similarly, the ANOVA results showed that psychological well-being scores did not significantly differ according to marital status ($F = 1.79, p > .05$).

The comparison results of fan loyalty scores according to demographic variables are presented in Table 6.

According to the independent samples t-test conducted by gender, male participants ($M = 3.24, SD = 0.99$) reported significantly higher fan loyalty scores than female participants ($M = 2.54, SD = 1.12$) ($t = 6.85, p < .001$).

The results of the one-way ANOVA conducted for age groups revealed a significant difference in fan loyalty scores across age groups ($F = 3.88, p < .01$). Post-hoc comparisons indicated that participants aged 18–25 ($M = 3.03$) had higher fan loyalty scores than those aged 26–33 ($M = 2.54$).

Similarly, the ANOVA results for social media following frequency indicated a statistically significant difference among groups in terms of fan loyalty ($F = 85.89, p < .001$). Post-hoc analysis showed that participants who followed their teams every day on

social media ($M = 3.69$) had significantly higher fan loyalty scores compared with all other groups.

In terms of team switching status, participants who had never changed their team ($M = 3.01$) demonstrated significantly higher fan loyalty scores than those who had changed their team ($M = 2.43$) ($t = -3.69$, $p < .001$).

Furthermore, participants who were members of a fan group ($M = 3.64$) reported significantly higher fan loyalty scores than those who were not members ($M = 2.73$) ($t = 7.39$, $p < .001$).

Finally, the ANOVA results indicated that fan loyalty scores differed significantly according to marital status ($F = 4.79$, $p < .01$). Post-hoc analysis showed that single participants ($M = 2.99$) had higher fan loyalty scores than married participants ($M = 2.59$).

Table 5. Comparison of Psychological Well-Being Scores According to Demographic Variables

Variable	Groups	n	Mean	SD	Test Value	p	Significant Difference
Gender	Male	234	5.51	1.14	$t = 1.47$	.143	–
	Female	185	5.34	1.23			
Age	18–25 (A)	298	5.47	1.17	$F = 1.99$	.116	–
	26–33 (B)	58	5.17	1.11			
	34–41 (C)	45	5.34	1.28			
	42+ (D)	18	5.88	1.26			
Social Media Following	Every day (A)	133	5.66	1.04	$F = 3.35$	.019*	A > C
	Several times a week (B)	109	5.37	1.21			
	Several times a month (C)	54	5.10	1.22			
	Rarely (D)	123	5.38	1.25			
Team Switching	Yes	57	5.13	1.31	$t = -2.13$	.034*	No > Yes
	No	362	5.48	1.15			
Fan Group Membership	Yes	92	5.46	1.22	$t = 0.22$	.828	–
	No	327	5.43	1.17			
Marital Status	Single (A)	331	5.47	1.15	$F = 1.79$	.169	–
	Other (B)	14	4.88	1.18			
	Married (C)	74	5.37	1.31			

Note: n = number of participants; Mean = arithmetic mean; SD = standard deviation; t = Independent Samples t-test; F = One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA); p = significance level (* $p < .05$).

Table 6. Comparison of Fan Loyalty Scores According to Demographic Variables

Variable	Groups	n	Mean	SD	Test Value	p	Significant Difference
Gender	Male	234	3.24	0.99	$t = 6.85$	.000*	Male > Female
	Female	185	2.54	1.12			
Age	18–25 (A)	298	3.03	1.09	$F = 3.88$	.009*	A > B
	26–33 (B)	58	2.54	1.12			
	34–41 (C)	45	2.72	1.13			
	42+ (D)	18	3.01	1.02			
Social Media Following	Every day (A)	133	3.69	0.78	$F = 85.89$	.000*	A > B, C, D B > C, D C > D
	Several times a week (B)	109	3.19	0.83			
	Several times a month (C)	54	2.68	0.97			
	Rarely (D)	123	1.99	0.95			
Team Switching	Yes	57	2.43	1.12	$t = -3.69$	.000*	No > Yes
	No	362	3.01	1.08			
Fan Group Membership	Yes	92	3.64	0.88	$t = 7.39$	.000*	Yes > No
	No	327	2.73	1.08			
Marital Status	Single (A)	331	2.99	1.09	$F = 4.79$	.009*	A > C
	Other (B)	14	3.25	1.08			
	Married (C)	74	2.59	1.11			

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

In order to examine the construct validity of the measurement scales used in this study, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted. Several model fit indices were examined to evaluate the adequacy of the measurement model. The obtained model fit indices are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Model Fit Indices

Index	Value	Acceptable Threshold	Result
χ^2/df	2.45	< 3.00	Good
RMSEA	.059	< .08	Good
CFI	.942	> .90	Good
GFI	.910	> .90	Good
SRMR	.048	< .05	Excellent

Note: χ^2/df = Chi-square divided by degrees of freedom; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; GFI = Goodness of Fit Index; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

As shown in Table 7, the model fit indices meet the recommended threshold values reported in the literature. The ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom ($\chi^2/df = 2.45$) is below the acceptable limit of 3, indicating a good overall model fit. In addition, the RMSEA (.059), CFI (.942), and GFI (.910) values meet the recommended cutoff values. The SRMR value (.048) is below .05, indicating an excellent level of model fit. These results demonstrate that the proposed model adequately fits the observed data.

The results of the hypotheses developed within the scope of this study are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Description	Result
H1 (Main Hypothesis)	There is a significant relationship between fan loyalty and psychological well-being.	Accepted
H2	Fan loyalty significantly predicts psychological well-being.	Accepted
H3	Fan loyalty scores differ according to gender.	Accepted (Male > Female)
H4	Fan loyalty differs according to age groups.	Accepted
H5	Fan loyalty increases as the frequency of following teams on social media increases.	Accepted
H6	Psychological well-being scores differ according to gender.	Rejected

As presented in Table 8, the main hypotheses of the study (H1 and H2) were supported. Accordingly, a statistically significant relationship was found between fan loyalty and psychological well-being, and fan loyalty was found to significantly predict psychological well-being.

When the results related to demographic variables were examined, fan loyalty scores were found to differ significantly according to gender, age groups, and the frequency of following teams on social media. In contrast, psychological well-being scores did not show a statistically significant difference according to gender. Therefore, hypothesis H6 was rejected.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the relationship between sports fans' levels of fan loyalty and their psychological well-being, as well as whether these variables differ according to several demographic characteristics. Overall, the findings indicate that fan loyalty is positively associated with psychological well-being, although the strength of this relationship appears to be relatively low.

One of the main findings of the study is the presence of a statistically significant but weak relationship between fan loyalty and psychological well-being ($r = .116$, $p < .05$). In addition, the results of the regression analysis revealed that fan loyalty explains approximately 1.1% of the variance in psychological well-being. These findings suggest that the sense of belonging and attachment to a sports team may contribute positively—albeit modestly—to individuals' psychological states. The relatively low explanatory power of the model indicates that psychological well-being is influenced by a wide range of personal, social, and contextual factors beyond fan loyalty. Therefore, fan loyalty should be considered only one of many variables associated with psychological well-being. However, given the multidimensional nature of psychological well-being, it is reasonable to assume that it cannot be explained solely by fan loyalty and that various individual, social, and psychological factors may also influence it.

Previous studies in the literature have shown that sports fandom can provide individuals with a sense of social belonging, strengthen social integration, and reduce feelings of loneliness while enhancing self-confidence (Çelik & Akçi, 2016). Similarly, a strong sense of belonging and integration within a social group has been associated with greater group cohesion, interpersonal connectedness, and positive psychosocial outcomes among young individuals (Aslan, 2013). Nevertheless, the relatively low impact of fan loyalty on psychological well-being may also be explained by the fact that highly identified fans can experience negative emotional reactions to adverse team outcomes, which may undermine well-being under certain circumstances (Lee et al., 2025). This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing that fan identification can serve both adaptive and maladaptive psychological functions depending on the intensity of identification and the nature of fan experiences (Oyman & Başbozkurt, 2021; Wann, 2015).

Another finding of the study indicates that fan loyalty levels differ significantly according to gender. Male participants were found to have higher fan loyalty scores compared to female participants. This situation may be explained by the fact that sport, particularly football fandom, has historically developed as a predominantly male-dominated cultural field in which gendered norms and practices tend to privilege male participation and visibility (Sarıkulak & Koca, 2019). In contrast, psychological well-being scores did not significantly differ according to gender. This finding may indicate that psychological well-being among sports fans is influenced by factors other than gender, such as individual experiences, social engagement, and the nature of involvement with sport.

Regarding age differences, participants aged 18–25 were found to have higher fan loyalty scores compared to other age groups. This finding may be explained by the fact

that identity formation processes are particularly salient during young adulthood and that the need for social belonging and group integration tends to be stronger during this developmental stage (Aslan, 2013).

Another important finding of the study is the relationship between social media engagement and fan loyalty. Participants who followed their teams more frequently on social media reported higher levels of fan loyalty. This result is consistent with previous research indicating that digital platforms facilitate fan–club interaction and strengthen emotional attachment between supporters and sports organizations (Doğru et al., 2021).

Additionally, participants who had never changed the team they support were found to have higher levels of both psychological well-being and fan loyalty. When the reasons for team switching were examined, social environment emerged as the most influential factor. This finding suggests that fandom is not merely an individual preference but also a social identity shaped by cultural interaction and social surroundings (Gülmez, 2025; Wann et al., 2001).

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that sports clubs and fan organizations may benefit from creating environments that strengthen supporters' sense of belonging and social connectedness. In particular, structured fan engagement activities and digital communication strategies may contribute not only to fan loyalty but also to psychosocial well-being at a modest level.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The results of this study indicate that there is a positive but relatively weak relationship between fan loyalty and psychological well-being among sports fans. The findings of the confirmatory factor analysis indicate that the measurement model demonstrated an acceptable level of fit with the observed data. Overall, the results suggest that fandom may play a meaningful—though limited—role in individuals' psychosocial experiences.

Based on these findings, sports clubs may benefit from viewing fans not only as economic consumers but also as participants in broader social and community networks. Developing social and cultural activities that strengthen fans' sense of belonging, increasing interaction among supporter communities, and establishing stronger communication channels with fans—particularly through digital platforms—may represent important strategies for sports organizations.

Future research may further explore the relationships between the subdimensions of fan loyalty and different dimensions of psychological well-being. In addition, comparative studies involving fan groups from different sports branches may provide a broader understanding of the relationship between fandom and psychological outcomes.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, the sample consisted of participants selected through convenience sampling, which limits the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the majority of the participants were between 18 and 25 years of age, which may limit the applicability of the findings to older fan populations. Second, the data were

collected through self-report measures, which may be affected by social desirability and response bias. Third, the cross-sectional design of the study does not allow causal inferences regarding the relationship between fan loyalty and psychological well-being. Finally, the relatively low explanatory power of the regression model suggests that psychological well-being may be influenced by many other individual and social variables not included in the present study.

Kısaltmalar / Abbreviations

SD — Standard Deviation

n — Sample size

Mean (M) — Mean (Ortalama) (tablolarda Mean kullanılmış)

t — t-test statistic

F — F statistic (ANOVA kullandığınız için eklenmeli)

p — Significance value

R² — Coefficient of determination (regresyon tablosunda kullanılmış)

β — Standardized regression coefficient (regresyon tablosunda kullanılmış)

Beyanlar / Declarations

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

Bu çalışmanın hazırlanması ve yazımı sürecinde "Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi" kapsamında bilimsel, etik ve alıntı kurallarına uyulmuştur. Araştırmada kullanılan veri toplama araçları, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Etik Kurulu tarafından incelenmiş ve etik açıdan uygun bulunmuştur (Karar Tarihi: 06 Mayıs 2026, Referans No: E-47336874-050.99-2600101285, Karar No: 13/14-2026-YÖNP-0114). Toplanan veriler üzerinde herhangi bir tahrifat yapılmamış olup, bu çalışma değerlendirilmek üzere başka herhangi bir akademik yayın organına gönderilmemiştir. Bu makaleyle ilgili doğabilecek her türlü etik ihlalden yazarlar sorumludur.

During the preparation and writing of this study, scientific, ethical, and citation rules were followed in accordance with the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Guidelines." No alterations were made to the collected data, and this study has not been submitted to any other academic publication platform for evaluation. The data collection instruments used in this study were reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Health Sciences (Decision date: 06 May 2026, Reference number: E-47336874-050.99-2600101285, Decision No: 13/14-2026-YÖNP-0114). The authors accept full responsibility for any potential ethical violations related to this manuscript.

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

Çalışmanın tasarımı ve planlanması, veri toplama, analizi ve yorumlanması, makalenin yazımı, veri düzenleme, yöntem belirleme, yazım – özgün taslak ile yazım – gözden geçirme ve düzenleme süreçlerine Z.K. ve E.Y. eşit katkı sağlamıştır. Tüm yazarlar makalenin önemli noktalarını eleştirel bir şekilde gözden geçirmiş ve makalenin son hâlini onaylamıştır.

Z.K. and E.Y. contributed equally to the design and planning of the study, data collection, analysis and interpretation, manuscript preparation, data organization, methodology development, writing of the original draft, and review and editing of the manuscript. All authors critically reviewed the manuscript and approved the final version of the article.

Fon Desteği / Funding

None.

Teşekkür / Acknowledgements

None.

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