Asian Journal of Education and Training
Vol. 6, No. 3, 426-432, 2020
ISSN(E) 2519-5387
DOI: 10.20448/journal.522.2020.63.426.432

An Examination of the Athletic Identities of High School Students

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the athletic identities of elite student athletes engaging in individual and team sports in high schools. The study group consisted of 1034 elite student athletes, 302 female and 732 male. The mean age of the student athletes is 16.85 ± 1.87. Descriptive scanning model was used in the study. Personal Information Form and Athletic Identity Questionnaire (AIQ) were used to collect the data. In the analysis, first of all, the data were examined with SPSS22 to observe whether they showed normal distribution. Afterwards, of the parametric tests, Independent Samples T-test, One Way Anova test and correlation analysis were used in the analysis of the collected data. In terms of individual and team sports student athletes, a significant difference was found in favor of individual student athletes in terms of total score of athletic identity and all sub-dimensions. As a result of the analysis, it was found that women student athletes, the ones who have athletic history in their families and national student athletes have a stronger athletic identity, and that the age of student athletes increases, the level of encouragement of the family decreases, in addition to this, it was concluded that student athletes doing individual sports, give more importance to their physical appearance, and the activity they do and feel more adequate when doing physical activities than team student athletes.

Keywords: High school, Student athlete, Individual, Team, Sport, Athletic identity.

Citation | Anil Turkeli (2020). An Examination of the Athletic Identities of High School Students. Asian Journal of Education and Training, 6(3): 426-432.
History:
Received: 10 April 2020
Revised: 14 May 2020
Accepted: 17 June 2020
Published: 23 June 2020

Publisher: Asian Online Journal Publishing Group

Acknowledgement: This research was carried out in a whole season. A large number of student athletes engaged in individual and team sports participated in the research. The fact that sampling is strong and there are few studies about athletic identity in the literature increases the importance of this study. I would like to thank all our student athletes who contributed to this study.
Funding: This study received no specific financial support.
Competing Interests: The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests regarding the publication of this paper.
Transparency: The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study was reported; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained.
Ethical: This study follows all ethical practices during writing.

Contents

Contribution of this paper to the literature
A large number of student athletes engaged in individual and team sports participated in the research. The fact that sampling is strong and there are few studies about athletic identity in the literature increases the importance of this study.

1. Introduction

Sport has an important place in the formation of people's identities and the integration process of the individual with the society. A person adapts to the society through sports and guarantees his / her material and spiritual development through sports.

Identity is the fact of being who a person is and identifying oneself. Identity, which covers all aspects of an individual, is related to how one sees oneself and how he is seen by the society. In daily life, individuals are recognized by themselves and others by their identities. In other words, the features that distinguish a person from other people are tried to be revealed by identity. Since the social life of a person is understood by understanding who others are and who he is Jenkins (2014). Therefore, student athletes who adopt the sport as a lifestyle and do it at the top level form their athletic identity (Horton & Mack, 2000).

Athletic identity is defined as how much an individual cares about and considers himself as a student athlete and it is an element of individual's perception of sport-specific self Aşçı, Cetinkalp, and Altıntaş (2014). In other words, the athletic identity, determined by the student athlete and affected by the environment, is an individual trait that is given importance and value by the individual (regular training, regular diet). The perception of sport identity is related to the extent to which the student athlete identifies himself with the sport. In addition, this perception is an important concept that affects the ways in which the student athlete copes with difficulties, action and decision-making processes (Horton & Mack, 2000). According to Danish, a strong athletic identity is essential for success and high level performance in sport. It is stated that individuals with strong athletic identity are more willing to participate in sports and exercise activities than individuals with weak athletic identity and perceive themselves more positively in the field of sports (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Lamont-Mills & Christensen, 2006). A strong athletic identity contributes to the development of skills, sporting performance, confidence, self-perception, body image, health, physical fitness and social communication (Tasiemski, Kennedy, Gardner, & Blaikley, 2004). While Brewer, Van Raalte and Linder considered sport identity as a competitor, sport-specific psychological structure, Anderson considered athletic identity as a psychological structure specific to participation in exercise and physical activity as well as competition sports.

Recent research has shown that a strong athletic identity has even more important place in individuals' lives (Watt & Moore, 2001). Student athletes with a strong athletic identity spend more time with their team mates and coaches and therefore they strengthen this identity much more (Horton & Mack, 2000). Families, friends, coaches, teachers and the media can all support this identity. As a result, being a student athlete is of great psychological importance for a student athlete to gain an athletic identity (Brewer et al., 1993).

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

In this study, descriptive scanning model is used in which the individual or object that is the subject of the research is tried to be defined within its own conditions and as it exists. In the research, questionnaire technique was used as data collection technique. The questionnaire, which is a systematic data collection technique, is applied in the form of asking questions to people who form a study group on a specific subject and collecting the necessary information from them (Karasar, 2012).

2.2. Research Group

The research group of the study consisted of 1034 elite student athletes in high schools, 302 female, 732 male, who engaged in individual and team sports in 2018-2019 season, were selected for easy individual sampling. The mean age of the student athletes was 16.85 ± 1.87.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form: The personal information form which was developed by the researcher consists of questions about the independent variables such as gender, educational status, age, age of being a licensed student athlete, national student athlete status, family income level and the status of having athletic background in family in order to gather information about the student athletes involved in the research.

Athletic Identity Questionnaire (AIQ): AIQ is a measurement tool which was developed by Anderson, Masse, and Hergenroeder (2007) in order to evaluate the general sport identity of individuals in exercise, sports and physical activity environment and adapted to Turkish by Aşçı, Cetinkalp, and Altıntaş (2014). The scale consists of 40 items in which the judgments are made according to the 5-point evaluation step (1 = Strongly disagree-5 = Strongly agree) and includes four sub-dimensions: Appearance (5 items; for example, I look fit as a person exercising; my body looks in shape), Competence (6 items; e.g., I rely on my sporting skills), Importance commitment (8 items; for example, I love exercise), and Encouragement (21 items; for example, they encourage me to be physically active or to do exercise). The fourth sub-dimensions, "Encouragement", is evaluated as family support (7 items), friend support (7 items) and the support of teachers/other adults (7 items) in itself.

2.4. Data Collection Process

The data collection tools used in the study were applied to elite student athletes engaged in individual and team sports in 2018 and 2019 during the resting periods after obtaining the necessary permissions. Participation in the study was based on the principle of volunteering. In addition, the purpose of the survey was explained to the participants before the survey and the necessary warnings were made by specifying the points to be considered.

The questionnaires collected were checked and incomplete or incorrectly filled questionnaires were not included in the study.

2.5. Data Analysis

In the analysis of the data collected in the study, first of all, the data was examined to observe whether it showed normal distribution. Afterwards, of the parametric tests, Independent Samples T-test, One Way Anova test and correlation analysis were used in the analysis of the collected data. Significance level was taken as 0.05 in the study.

3. Findings

Table-1. Total scores and sub-dimensions results of AIQ according to gender variable.

	Gender	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Appearance	female	302	18,8576	4,25159	1032	,866	,387
	male	732	19,1202	4,50921			
Competence	female	302	24,8278	5,09545	1032	1,797	,073
	male	732	24,1503	5,67586			
Importance	female	302	33,0430	6,77411	1032	2,005	,045
	male	732	32,0505	7,42211			
Encouragement from family	female	302	27,3477	5,96237	1032	2,340	,019
	male	732	26,3251	6,55573			
Encouragement from best friends	female	302	27,6523	6,40144	1032	,860	,390
	male	732	27,2623	6,72843			
Encouragement from teachers/other adults	female	302	29,2815	5,52406	1032	3,270	,001
	male	732	27,9358	6,20820			
Total	female	302	161,0099	26,92891	1032	2,082	,038
	male	732	156,8443	30,15623			

Note: *p < 0,05.

In Table 1,

No significant difference was found according to gender in sub-dimension of appearance (t(1032):,866; p>0,05). No significant difference was found according to gender in the sub-dimension of competence (t(1032):1,797; p>0,05).A significant difference was found in favor of female student athletes according to gender in the sub-dimension of importance (t(1032):2,005; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of female student athletes according to gender in the sub-dimension of encouragement from family (t(1032):2,340; p<0,05). No significant difference was found according to gender in the sub-dimension of encouragement from best friends (t(1032):,860; p>0,05). A significant difference was found in favor of female student athletes according to gender in the sub-dimension of encouragement from teachers/other adults (t(1032):3,270; p<0,05).

No significant difference was found in the total score according to gender (t(1032):2,082; p>0,05).

Table-2. Anova results according to education status variable.

		Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	p
Appearance	Between Groups	103,771	3	34,590	1,762	,153
	Within Groups	20215,271	1030	19,626		
	Total	20319,042	1033			
Competence	Between Groups	71,916	3	23,972	,787	,501
	Within Groups	31390,745	1030	30,476		
	Total	31462,662	1033			
Importance	Between Groups	379,510	3	126,503	2,417	,065
	Within Groups	53912,660	1030	52,342		
	Total	54292,170	1033			
Encouragement from family	Between Groups	301,050	3	100,350	2,459	,061
	Within Groups	42039,604	1030	40,815		
	Total	42340,655	1033			
Encouragement from best friends	Between Groups	208,095	3	69,365	1,579	,193
	Within Groups	45252,559	1030	43,935		
	Total	45460,655	1033			
Encouragement from teachers/other adults	Between Groups	117,329	3	39,110	1,071	,361
	Within Groups	37628,872	1030	36,533		
	Total	37746,201	1033			
Total	Between Groups	1899,904	3	633,301	,737	,530
	Within Groups	884855,257	1030	859,083		
	Total	886755,162	1033			

Note: *p < 0,05.

In Table 2,

No significant difference was found according to the education status in the sub-dimension of appearance (F(3,1030): 1,762; p>0,05).

No significant difference was found according to the education status in the sub-dimension of competence (F(3,1030): ,787; p>0,05).

No significant difference was found according to education status in the sub-dimension of importance (F(3,1030):2,417; p>0,05).

No significant difference was found according to educational status in the sub-dimension of encouragement from family (F(3,1030):2,459; p>0,05).

No significant difference was found according to educational status in the sub-dimension of encouragement from best friends (F(3,1030): 1,579; p>0,05).

No significant difference was found and other adults according to educational status in the sub-dimension of encouragement from teachers/other adults (F(3,1030): 1,071; p>0,05).

No significant difference was found in the total score of the athletic identity according to the education status of the participants in Anova analysis (F(3,1030): ,737; p>0,05).

Table-3. Correlation results according to age variable.

		Age	Appearance	Competence	Importance	Encouragement from family	Encouragement from best friends	Encouragement from teachers/other adults	Total
Age	Correlation	1	,005	-,007	-,04	-,063*	,054	-,021	,017
	p		,868	,830	,149	,042	,081	,505	,576
	n	1034	1034	1034	1034	1034	1034	1034	1034

In Table 3, a significant negative correlation was found between age and encouragement from family at low level.

Table-4. Sub-dimensions and total score results of AIQ according to age of licensed student athlete variable.

		Appearance	Competence	Importance	Encouragement from family	Encouragement from best friends	Encouragement from teachers/other adults	Total
Age of Licensed Student athlete	Pearson Correlation	,115**	,073*	,057	,064*	,069*	,033	,082**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,019	,069	,038	,027	,291	,009
	N	1034	1034	1034	1034	1034	1034	1034

In Table 4, a significant positive correlation was found between age of being licensed student athlete and appearance, competence, encouragement from family, encouragement from best friends and total score at low level.

Table-5. Sub-dimensions and total score results of AIQ according to the status of being a national student athlete variable.

	Status of being a National Student athlete	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Appearance	yes	195	20,7538	3,73765	1031	6,091	,000
	no	838	18,6420	4,49274			
Competence	yes	195	25,7641	4,65797	1031	4,010	,000
	no	838	24,0167	5,65514			
Importance	yes	195	34,4103	5,89127	1031	4,476	,000
	no	838	31,8532	7,45380			
Encouragement from family	yes	195	28,4974	5,50386	1031	4,588	,000
	no	838	26,1838	6,52224			
Encouragement from best friends	yes	195	28,7436	5,51716	1031	3,215	,001
	no	838	27,0549	6,83458			
Encouragement from teachers/other adults	yes	195	29,4769	5,67262	1031	2,964	,003
	no	838	28,0573	6,10259			
Total	yes	195	167,6462	24,94763	1031	5,143	,000
	no	838	155,8079	29,80390			

Note: *p < 0,05.

In Table 5,

A significant difference was found in favor of national student athletes according to the status of being a national student athlete in the sub-dimension of appearance (t(1031):,000; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of national student athletes according to the status of being a national student athlete in the sub-dimension of competence (t(1031):,000; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of national student athletes according to the status of being a national student athlete in the sub-dimension of importance (t(1031):,000; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of national student athletes according to the status of being a national student athlete in the sub-dimension of encouragement from family (t(1031):,000; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of national student athletes according to the status of being a national student athlete in the sub-dimension of encouragement from best friends (t(1031):,000; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of national student athletes according to the status of being a national student athlete in the sub-dimension of encouragement from teachers/other adults (t(1031):,000; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of national student athletes according to the status of being a national student athlete on the basis of total score t(1031):,000; p<0,05).

Table-6. Sub-dimensions and total score results of AIQ according to family income level variable.

		Appearance	Competence	Importance	Encouragement from family	Encouragement from best friends	Encouragement from teachers/other adults	Total
Family Income Level	Pearson Correlation	,203**	,131**	,136**	,203**	,149**	,136**	,196**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	1034	1034	1034	1034	1034	1034	1034

In Table 6, a low of level positive meaningful relation was found between the family income level and the sub-dimensions scores of appearance, competence, importance, encouragement from family, encouragement from best friends, encouragement from teachers/other adults and total score.

Table-7. Sub-dimensions and total score results of AIQ according to having an athletic background in family variable.

	Having an Athletic Background in Family	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Appearance	yes	409	19,9291	3,72556	1031	5,300	,000
	no	624	18,4535	4,75443			
Competence	yes	409	25,6577	4,51579	1031	6,310	,000
	no	624	23,4824	5,93596			
Importance	yes	409	33,9120	5,99363	1031	5,751	,000
	no	624	31,2997	7,80017			
Encouragement from family	yes	409	28,5012	5,60336	1031	7,868	,000
	no	624	25,3862	6,59709			
Encouragement from best friends	yes	409	28,5281	6,27786	1031	4,570	,000
	no	624	26,6170	6,76022			
Encouragement from teachers/other adults	yes	409	29,4914	5,19196	1031	5,093	,000
	no	624	27,5561	6,43252			
Total	yes	409	166,0196	23,42258	1031	7,271	,000
	no	624	152,7949	31,51477			

Note: *p < 0,05.

In Table 7,

A significant difference was found in favor of those with athletic background in family in of appearance (t(1031):5,300; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of those with athletic background in family in sub-dimension of competence (t(1031):6,310; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of those with athletic background in family in sub-dimension of importance (t(1031):5,751; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of those with athletic background in family in sub-dimension of encouragement from family (t(1031):7,868; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of those with athletic background in family in sub-dimension of encouragement from best friends (t(1031):4,570; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of those with athletic background in family in sub-dimension of encouragement from teachers/other adults (t(1031):5,093; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of those with athletic background in family according to total score of athletic identity (t(1031): 7,271; p<0,05).

Table-8. Sub-dimensions and total score results of AIQ according to doing individual and team sports variable.

		N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Appearance	Individual Sports	311	19,6720	4,05707	1032	3,000	,003
	Team Sports	723	18,7732	4,56422			
Competence	Individual Sports	311	26,1833	4,68303	1032	7,182	,000
	Team Sports	723	23,5588	5,66447			
Importance	Individual Sports	311	34,4084	6,11269	1032	6,121	,000
	Team Sports	723	31,4509	7,51794			
Encouragement from family	Individual Sports	311	27,2219	6,09645	1032	1,973	,049
	Team Sports	723	26,3665	6,51653			
Encouragement from best friends	Individual Sports	311	28,4502	7,15338	1032	3,432	,001
	Team Sports	723	26,9142	6,34693			
Encouragement from teachers/other adults	Individual Sports	311	29,1576	6,21166	1032	2,902	,004
	Team Sports	723	27,9723	5,94055			
Total	Individual Sports	311	165,0932	25,39890	1032	5,123	,000
	Team Sports	723	155,0360	30,34376			

Note: *p < 0,05.

In Table 8,

A significant difference was found in favor of individual student athletes in terms of individual and team sports in the sub-dimension of appearance (t(1032): 3,000; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of individual student athletes in terms of individual and team sports in sub-dimension of competence (t(1032): 7,182; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of individual student athletes in terms of individual and team sports in the sub-dimension of importance (t(1032): 6,121; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of individual student athletes in terms of individual and team sports in the sub-dimension of encouragement from family (t(1032): 1,973; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of individual student athletes in terms of individual and team sports in the sub-dimension of encouragement from best friends (t(1032): 3,432; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of individual student athletes in terms of individual and team sports in the sub-dimension of encouragement from teachers/other adults (t(1032): 2,902; p<0,05).

A significant difference was found in favor of individual student athletes in terms of individual and team sports according to total score of athletic identity (t(1032): 5,123; p<0,05).

4. Conclusion and Discussion

As a result, no significant difference was found in the total score of athletic identity according to gender and education status. However, it has been determined that in the sub-dimensions of importance, encouragement from family and encouragement from teachers/other adults, there is a significant difference in favor of female student athletes. This result can be said that female student athletes do their job in a more serious and self-sacrificing way, taking into account the discourse of the people they care about in their immediate environment. When the related literature is examined, it is observed that the scores of the athletic identity do not differ according to the gender variable; in other words, being female or male is not a determinant in determining the level of athletic identity is in parallel with the results of the studies conducted by Can and Kaçay (2016); Cetinkaya (2015); Lantz and Schroeder (1999); Martin, Adams-Mushett, and Smith (1995); Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer (1996); Saraç and Toprak (2017); Senger (2017); Yanar, Kırandı, and Yusuf (2017). In contrast to the results of many studies in the literature, in the study conducted by Tasiemski et al. (2004) it was found that athletic identity scores differ significantly in favor of men. In the study results conducted by Anderson., Mâsse, Zhang, Coleman, and Chang (2011) on children and adolescents results similar to the findings of our study were reached and found that the variables of gender and educational status do not have an impact on the identity of student athletes.

While there was no significant relationship between the age of the participants and the total score of sport identity, a negative relationship was found in the sub-dimensions of encouragement from family at low level. It can be said that as the age of the student athletes increases, the level of encouragement from family decreases.

That the result of athletic identity scores do not differ according to the age variable in the study of Karakaş. (2017) on the student athletes between the ages of 16-28 and in the study of Wiechman and Williams (1997) on high school student athletes is consistent with the findings of this study.

According to the age of being a licensed student athlete, a significant positive correlation was found in the total score and sub-dimensions of athletic identity at low level. As the age of individual and team student athletes' being licensed student athletes increases, their athletic identities increase. When the literature examined, in the study of Oregon (2010) any significant difference between the duration of schooling and the identity of student athletes during school years couldn't be found. Adler and Adler (1991) on the other hand, indicate that with the advancement of student and sports experience, athletic identity will be strengthened.

A significant relationship was determined in favor of national student athletes in total score and sub-dimensions of athletic identity. According to this result, national sportsmen have a higher level of athletic identity than non-national sportsmen. Cetinkaya (2015) in his study on student athletes engaged in team sport, states that participants who are national team student athletes have lower identity levels than those who are not national team student athletes, but the difference is not significant. Sellers and Kuperminc (1997) stated that young student athletes take elite student athletes who play in the national team as role models in their study. The researchers concluded that this situation will contribute positively to the identity of the student athlete. We can consider this situation as a motivating factor for strengthening the identity of student athletes for young student athletes.

A significant positive correlation was found in the total score and sub-dimensions of athletic identity at the level of family income at low level. As the family income level of the student athletes increases, so does their athletic identity. In the total score and sub-dimensions of the athletic identity, a significant relationship was found in favor of those with athletic background in family. The student athletes who have athletic background in their families have a strong athletic identity. Student athletes with a strong athletic identity contribute to the development of skills, sporting performance, confidence, self-perception, body image, health, physical fitness and social communication. A significant difference was found in favor of individual sports in terms of total and sub-dimensions according to individual and team sports. It was concluded that student athletes doing individual sports, give more importance to their physical appearance, and the activity they do and feel more adequate when doing physical activities than team student athletes.

There are not many studies on athletic identity and sports branches in the related literature. In the study conducted by Cetinkaya. (2010) on student athletes-students, which is thought to be related to the results of this study, it was found that the athletic identities of the team student athletes were higher than the student athletes who do individual sports. This situation can be interpreted as the friendship environment and the social sharing in team sports support the identity much more. It can be argued that the prediction that the human being, as a social being, will tend to the values of the group she interacts with in the field of sports as in other fields. The prediction that the human, as a social being, will tend to the values of the group s/he interacts with in the field of sports as in other fields can be advocated.

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