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Contact

Editor: editor@sporteconres.com

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Büşra YILMAZ

Career Planning Behaviors of Sports Sciences Students: Exploring the Role of Economic Factors in Career Dedication

Muhammet Mavibaş¹ , Yunus Emre Çingöz² 
Murat Turan¹ , Buğra Çağatay Savaş¹ 

Abstract

This study explores the career planning behaviors of Sports Sciences students, focusing on their career dedication levels within the context of economic conditions and demographic variables. The sample consisted of 174 students from Erzurum Technical University. A relational survey model, which is designed to examine the presence and direction of relationships between variables without manipulation, was employed to identify possible associations between demographic factors and career dedication. Data were collected using a personal information form and the 9-item Career Dedication Scale. Descriptive statistics, t-tests, and Anova were conducted. Tukey's HSD post-hoc test was applied to determine which specific groups differed from each other. Results showed that female students had significantly higher career dedication than males, while no significant differences were found based on department, age, or academic year. Although overall dedication was high, the lowest score was for participation in additional training activities, indicating financial barriers. Economic constraints may limit students' ability to engage in essential career development efforts, especially in fields like sports sciences where job opportunities are limited. These findings highlight the role of financial support in sustaining career commitment. Institutions should offer accessible career services, affordable training programs, and targeted support for economically disadvantaged students. Addressing economic disparities is essential to ensure all students can realize their career goals, regardless of financial background.

Keywords

Career dedication, faculty of sports sciences, student

¹Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Erzurum Technical University, Türkiye.

²Department of Recreation, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Bayburt University, Türkiye.

Corresponding Author: Muhammet Mavibaş

Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Erzurum Technical University, Türkiye.

Email: muhammet.mavibas@erzurum.edu.tr

Introduction

Career refers to a combination of roles undertaken, jobs performed, and achievements obtained by an individual throughout their lifetime. This definition points not to a limited period of life, but to the individual's entire lifespan. The career process is shaped by a series of factors, ranging from life events and the continuity of professional and other roles to the progressions and setbacks experienced during career development (Super, 1980; Kuzgun, 2006; Özyürek, 2013).

Traditional career development theories have been criticized for their limited applicability across diverse cultures and socio-economic classes. However, recent contemporary theories and models offer a more holistic approach by considering the individual's contextual conditions (Bacanlı & Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2022). Furthermore, as emphasized by Bakır and Büyükgöze-Kavas (2021), the family-being the first social institution a child is born into-plays a decisive role in the career development process. Today, individuals actively shape their career paths by either taking advantage of or turning down the opportunities that come their way (Kuzgun, 2000).

The continuously evolving nature of modern career environments has highlighted the importance of proactive career behaviors and career commitment (Muslu & Temur, 2021). Proactivity refers to the initiative individuals take not merely to adapt to their current circumstances, but to change them. This approach, which requires a continuous process of learning and adaptation for personal development and employability, lies within the scope of proactive behaviors (Korkmaz et al., 2020; Muslu & Temur, 2021). Although relatively new in the literature, the term "career commitment" bears similarities to concepts such as career beliefs and career engagement. However, while these concepts represent attitudes, career commitment is more focused on individual behaviors (Akdoğanlı, 2019; Çakmak Otluoğlu & Akdoğanlı, 2019).

The strategic approaches adopted by individuals during their career journey include activities such as career planning, networking, skill development, and career initiative-collectively referred to as proactive career behavior (Hirschi & Freund, 2014). The concept of proactivity implies that individuals not only accept their current situations but strive to improve them by taking initiative (Crant, 2000). Moreover, proactive behavior encompasses actions that are

within the individual's control and aimed at future-oriented goals (Parker, Williams & Turner, 2006). Individuals with proactive personalities actively analyze the ever-changing dynamics of the business world, expand their capacities, gather information about employment opportunities, and aim to acquire the skills necessary for achieving long-term career goals (Veldhoven & Dorenbosch, 2008). In the modern labor market, such proactive approaches are essential (Fay & Kamps, 2006). This suggests that proactivity plays a critical role in career development (Presbitero, 2015).

The term career commitment refers to specific behaviors related to one's career. In this context, it differs from terms such as job engagement, career commitment (in the attitudinal sense), and career motivation, which mostly describe mental and emotional processes. Career commitment encompasses individual career-related behaviors, particularly activities such as career planning, career exploration, and career management strategies, within a single framework (Hirschi, 2014; Jaensch, Hirschi & Spurk, 2016).

The university period enables individuals to make more informed decisions about their careers and also serves as an exploratory phase where potential career paths are evaluated (Martens & Felissa, 1998). The importance of this period is further emphasized by the guidance and support provided to students, as the lack of proper guidance may lead to entering the workforce without clear goals or plans, resulting in a waste of time and resources during the career-shaping process (Leung et al., 2011). Individuals lacking career direction may experience uncertainty when making career decisions (Sangganjanavanich & Magnuson, 2011). These uncertainties may prompt individuals to pursue graduate or doctoral programs, making postgraduate education a frequently chosen path during the early stages of a career (Lopatto, 2004; Gardner & Barnes, 2007).

During career planning, the individual serves as the main agent of the plan; however, organizational support is also necessary in this journey. This indicates that the individual and the organization are not independent from each other in the career planning process, and although they have different roles, they share a mutual responsibility (Uçar, 2010). A detailed examination of the factors influencing career choices and an awareness of the potential impacts of these choices on one's life can help individuals make more informed decisions (Pehlivan, 1994). As noted in the model developed by Meece and colleagues (1982), students base their career choices not only on their perceived abilities

and skills but also on their beliefs about the advantages and disadvantages of different career paths (Yılmaz et al., 2012).

Perceived career congruence, positive expectations about career, and information about the job market play a critical role in shaping individuals' career trajectories. However, a review of the current literature reveals that these concepts have not been sufficiently addressed, especially in studies conducted on university students (Duffy, 2010; Siyez & Yusupu, 2015).

In recent years, global economic fluctuations and the employment crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic have had a profound impact on individuals' career planning behaviors and their levels of career dedication. Under conditions of economic uncertainty, students increasingly perceive job security as fragile, which prompts them to engage in more structured, strategic, and proactive career behaviors (Blustein et al., 2020; Rigotti et al., 2020). Within this context, it becomes essential to explore how students' perceptions of the economy influence their motivation to commit to career-related goals and efforts.

Economic factors are particularly salient for students in the field of sports sciences, where job opportunities tend to be more limited and competitive. The financial constraints faced by many students may hinder their participation in career development activities such as training programs, certifications, or internships-all of which are considered important components of proactive career engagement (Schultheiss, 2021). Thus, understanding the economic background and access to resources is key to analyzing the career commitment behaviors of future sports professionals.

Moreover, the perception of job insecurity in times of economic downturn can reshape individuals' long-term motivations and willingness to pursue sustainable career paths. Empirical studies suggest that career dedication is influenced not only by personal interest and ambition but also by contextual variables such as socioeconomic status and perceived market stability (Hoobler et al., 2014; Sora et al., 2013). These findings underscore the importance of examining the link between economic hardship and students' career planning strategies to obtain a more holistic understanding of career development in higher education.

Examining the proactive career commitment levels of students in Faculties of Sport Sciences is critical for understanding how actively individuals take control of their careers and what motivates them. This knowledge can contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of educational programs, personalizing career counseling and guidance services, accurately identifying sectoral needs, and maximizing individuals' professional potential. Such an approach supports both individual career success and societal development in the sports sector. Based on these reasons, this study was conducted to examine the career-related behaviors of students in faculties of sport sciences.

Method

Research Design

In this study, which aimed to investigate the career planning behaviors of sport sciences students, the relational survey model was used. This model aims to determine the presence and degree of relationships between two or more variables through statistical testing and measurement of changes resulting from their comparisons (Karasar, 2011).

Research Group

The population of the research consisted of students from the Faculty of Sport Sciences at Erzurum Technical University. The sample included a total of 174 students, 113 of whom were male and 61 females. Participants were selected through convenience sampling, considering accessibility and voluntary participation.

Inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) active enrollment as an undergraduate student in one of the academic departments within the Faculty of Sports Sciences; (2) voluntary agreement to participate in the study; and (3) provision of complete and valid responses to all items in the measurement instruments. Exclusion criteria included: incomplete or inconsistent responses that rendered the data unusable for analysis.

Data Collection and Analysis

To determine the participants' demographic variables, a "Personal Information Form" created by the researcher was used. In addition, the "Career Commitment Scale," a one-dimensional, 9-item, 5-point Likert-type scale developed by Hirschi et. al. (2014) and adapted into Turkish by Korkmaz et al. (2019), was

used to measure students' behaviors related to career planning. In the study, frequency analysis was used to identify the participants' demographic characteristics, and descriptive statistics were used to determine the average scores obtained from the scale. Independent Samples t-Test was conducted to compare students' career commitment levels based on gender and department, while One-Way ANOVA was applied to assess differences based on age and academic year. Tukey's HSD post-hoc test was used to identify specific group differences when overall Anova results were significant.

Findings

In this section, the statistical results regarding participants' demographic characteristics, career commitment levels, and comparisons of career commitment based on gender, department, age, and academic year are presented based on the data obtained in the research.

Table 1. Demographic variables

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	113	64.9%
	Female	61	35.1%
Department	Coaching Education	41	23.6%
	Physical Education and Sport Teaching	133	76.4%
Age	18-19 years	62	35.6%
	20-21 years	57	32.8%
	22-23 years	32	18.4%
	24 years and older	23	13.2%
Academic Year	1st Year	54	31.0%
	2nd Year	35	20.1%
	3rd Year	42	24.1%
	4th Year	43	24.7%
Total		174	100%

Among the 174 participants, 64.9% were male and 35.1% female. In terms of departments, 23.6% were enrolled in Coaching Education, and 76.4% in Physical Education and Sport Teaching. Regarding age, the highest proportion was in the 18-19 age group (35.6%), and the lowest in 24 and above (13.2%). As for academic year, the distribution was relatively even across all four years, with the highest representation in the 1st year (31.0%).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of responses to the career commitment scale

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean (\bar{X})	SD (Ss)
1. I actively work to plan my professional future.	174	1.00	5.00	4.08	0.86
2. I take initiative to achieve my career goals.	174	1.00	5.00	4.01	0.82
3. I am interested in my career development.	174	1.00	5.00	4.02	0.83
4. I develop goals and plans for my future career.	174	1.00	5.00	4.05	0.88
5. I sincerely reflect on my values, interests, skills, and weaknesses.	174	1.00	5.00	4.17	0.75
6. I gather information about employers, opportunities, or the job market.	174	1.00	5.00	3.81	0.89
7. I contact or maintain contact with people who can help me professionally.	174	1.00	5.00	3.92	0.87
8. I voluntarily attend additional training, courses, or events to support my career.	174	1.00	5.00	3.56	0.98
9. I take on responsibilities or tasks that contribute to my professional development.	174	1.00	5.00	3.93	0.92
Overall Career Commitment	174	1.00	5.00	3.95	0.66

The highest mean score was for item 5 ($\bar{X} = 4.17 \pm 0.75$), indicating strong self-reflection among students. The lowest mean was for item 8 ($\bar{X} = 3.56 \pm 0.98$), possibly due to financial constraints. Overall, the general career commitment level was evaluated as "high" ($\bar{X} = 3.95 \pm 0.66$).

Table 3. Independent samples t-test results for career commitment

Variable	Group	N	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	t	p
Gender	Male	113	3.88	0.69	-1.997	.047*
	Female	61	4.08	0.57		
Department	Coaching Education	41	3.97	0.68	0.268	.798
	Physical Education & Sport Teaching	133	3.94	0.65		

*; $p < 0.05$

In the comparison of participants' career commitment levels based on gender, a statistically significant difference was found between groups ($p = .047$, $p < .05$). According to the results, female participants ($\bar{X} = 4.08 \pm 0.57$) demonstrated higher levels of career commitment behavior compared to male participants ($\bar{X} = 3.88 \pm 0.69$). In the comparison of career commitment levels according to department, no statistically significant difference was found between groups ($p = .798$, $p > .05$).

Table 4. One-Way Anova results for participants' overall career commitment scores

Variable	Group	N	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	F	p	Difference
Age	18-19 years	62	4.07	0.57	1.381	.250	-
	20-21 years	57	3.82	0.78			
	22-23 years	32	3.92	0.58			
	24+ years	23	3.98	0.64			
Academic Year	1st Year	54	3.98	0.56	0.488	.691	-
	2nd Year	35	3.87	0.67			
	3rd Year	42	4.02	0.69			
	4th Year	43	3.89	0.73			

*; $p < 0,05$

In the comparison of participants' career commitment levels based on age, no statistically significant difference was found between the groups ($p = .250$, $p > .05$). Similarly, the comparison of career commitment levels based on academic year revealed no significant difference between the groups ($p = .691$, $p > .05$).

Discussion and Conclusion

The plans that students in Faculties of Sport Sciences make during their university years regarding their future jobs, professions, and careers-as well as the initiatives they take to improve themselves-are among the key factors that influence their ability to achieve their long-term career goals. It is essential for these students to engage in active self-assessment, to identify and develop their talents and interests, and to address their deficiencies through purposeful effort. Such proactive efforts are expected to enable a smoother and faster transition to predetermined career objectives after graduation. Whether aiming for the private sector or public institutions, today's modern professional landscape expects individuals to be well-developed and competent in their respective fields. In the competitive climate of the contemporary era, self-development is of paramount importance. Based on these premises, this study was conducted to determine the proactive career commitment levels of sport sciences students who are still pursuing their education.

When analyzing responses to the items on the Career Commitment Scale developed for students in sport sciences faculties, the item with the highest average score was: "I sincerely reflect on my personal values, interests, skills, and weaknesses." The high level of agreement with this statement suggests that

students are actively making future-oriented career plans and taking the necessary steps to realize them. In essence, they appear to be conducting a personal SWOT analysis, identifying their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats more effectively in the context of their careers.

On the other hand, the item with the lowest mean score was: “I voluntarily participate in additional training, courses, or other activities to support my career.” This relatively low score may be attributed to the financial burden associated with such activities, which may limit some students' ability to participate. Nevertheless, even this item received a moderately high overall score. When the general career commitment levels were examined, it was determined that students demonstrated “high” levels of career commitment. These findings indicate that the students exhibit a proactive approach toward their careers. According to the results, proactive personality traits have a positive impact on career commitment.

Although this study found that sports sciences students generally demonstrated high levels of career dedication, it is important to consider how economic constraints may indirectly limit their ability to act on their career intentions. For example, the item with the lowest mean score-participation in additional training-may reflect not a lack of motivation but rather a lack of financial means. This aligns with the findings of Rigotti et al. (2020), who emphasized that economic strain during the pandemic significantly reduced students' opportunities for professional growth.

The sustainability of career dedication is closely linked to the presence of financial and institutional support mechanisms. Students from lower-income backgrounds often rely on scholarships, accessible training programs, and structured career services to remain engaged in their career paths. Previous studies have shown that social inequalities and economic disparities can translate into unequal access to leadership roles and professional opportunities later in life, particularly among underrepresented populations (McKinsey & Company & LeanIn.org, 2020; Schultheiss, 2021). Hence, institutional strategies to mitigate these effects are critical for fostering long-term engagement.

In conclusion, while students in this study appear to be proactively committed to their careers, this dedication must be viewed through the lens of structural opportunity. Economic hardship may undermine the actualization of even the most motivated individuals' career plans. To ensure equity in career development, universities and policymakers must consider economic vulnerability in the design of support programs. Career guidance should therefore incorporate not only psychological and academic assessments but also socio-economic risk factors that influence students' capacity to act on their career goals.

Our findings support the notion that a proactive personality significantly enhances an individual's career-related commitment, consistent with previous studies conducted by Bateman & Crant (1993), Siebert et al. (1999), Hou et al. (2014), Cai et al. (2015), Li et al. (2015), and Öncel (2014). In light of these findings, we gain a deeper understanding of how proactive personality traits influence an individual's capacity for career adaptability. The processes of self-improvement and personal development serve as a bridge between proactive personality and career adaptability. Studies by Abid et al. (2015) and Jiang (2017) also reinforce our results, highlighting the critical role of personal development in achieving career goals and framing how proactive personality traits contribute to this process.

When comparing the career commitment levels by gender, female students were found to exhibit higher levels of proactive career commitment than male students. This result suggests that female students may place greater emphasis on both their academic success and career planning. The academic literature includes numerous studies on gender differences in career adaptability. For example, research by Coetzee & Harry (2014), O'Connell et al. (2008), and Han & Rojewski (2015) has demonstrated that women may possess higher career adaptability skills than men. Conversely, other studies, such as that by Hou et al. (2014), challenge these findings by suggesting that men may show higher

levels of career adaptability than women. These contrasting results open the door for broader discussion regarding how gender interacts with career adaptability. Cultural, social, and individual factors may all contribute to these variations, emphasizing the need to evaluate such research from a wider perspective.

When comparing participants by academic department, it was found that students from Coaching Education and Physical Education and Sport Teaching demonstrated similar levels of career commitment. This suggests that the department of study does not have a significant influence on career commitment. Similarly, no significant differences were found with regard to age or academic year. The similarity in commitment levels between these two departments may stem from their shared emphasis on sport and physical activity, which can lead to similar career expectations and motivations among students. Additionally, socio-cultural norms and values may also contribute to these similarities. The lack of significant differences in career commitment based on variables such as age and year of study indicates that deeper personal and cultural factors may play a more substantial role.

In conclusion, the proactive career commitment observed among students in the Faculty of Sport Sciences appears to be a result of the faculty's practice-based educational approach, passion-driven learning environment, emphasis on

personal development, and the competitive nature of the field. The faculty's provision of real-world experience through practical training stimulates students' desire for success by leveraging their natural interest in sports and the competitive dynamics of the profession. Additionally, teamwork, communication skills, mentorship, and networking opportunities, which are embedded in the educational process, further support students in taking conscious and proactive steps toward their careers. In summary, the education received at the Faculty of Sport Sciences plays a pivotal role in enabling students to be active, focused, and passionate participants in shaping their professional futures.

In conclusion, the proactive career commitment observed among students in the Faculty of Sport Sciences can be attributed to the faculty's practice-based educational approach, passion-driven learning environment, emphasis on personal development, and the competitive nature of the field. The provision of real-world experience through practical training may stimulate students' motivation for success by activating their natural interest in sports and the profession's competitive dynamics. Furthermore, embedded components such as teamwork, communication skills, mentorship, and networking opportunities may support students in taking deliberate and proactive steps toward their careers.

Universities may consider tailoring career services not only to the academic and psychological needs of students but also to their financial realities by developing inclusive, accessible, and economically sensitive support mechanisms.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research sample consisted of 174 undergraduate students from a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader student populations or other faculties. Second, the use of a convenience sampling method may introduce selection bias and reduce the representativeness of the results. Third, all data were collected through self-report measures, which can be subject to social desirability bias and inaccuracies in self-perception. Lastly, although the study considered economic constraints, it did not include objective measures of participants' socioeconomic status, which could have provided a more nuanced understanding of financial factors affecting career dedication.

Author contributions

The aspects of the study handled by each author are given below: M.M: conception, design, data collection and processing, fundings, materials and process, writing, critical review; Y.E.C.: literature review and materials; M.T.: data collection and writing; B.Ç.S.: data collection, writing and critical review.

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Ethnical statement


This study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of University Atatürk (23.11.2023/ No. E-70400699-000-2300375299)

ORCID

¹Muhammet Mavıbaş 

²Yunus Emre Çingöz 

³Murat Turan 

⁴Buğra Çağatay Savaş 

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Financial Outlook of E-Sports

Talha Murathan¹ 
Murat Atay¹ 

Abstract

With the advancement of technology, high-speed internet, and broadcasting technologies, numerous revolutionary developments have emerged across various fields. Among these innovations in the realm of sports, one of the most striking developments is the e-sports industry, which has its own unique game rules and significant economic impact. The aim of this study is to examine the economic dimensions of e-sports games and organizations, as well as their potential contributions to the industry. This study employs the qualitative research method of document analysis to conduct an in-depth investigation into the economic aspects of the e-sports sector and its contributions. This new gaming phenomenon, which has rapidly attracted the attention of all age groups, has become a globally recognized trend. E-sports refers to computer-based video games played online that contribute to both the physical and cognitive development of players. With a continuously growing player and viewer base, e-sports organizations are experiencing rapid economic and cultural expansion. Findings indicate that e-sports has evolved into a globally expanding and economically thriving industry. The continuous growth and widespread adoption of e-sports have transformed the traditional sports landscape.

Keywords

Digital sports, economy, e-sports, industry, sport economy

¹Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Inonu University, Türkiye.

Introduction

Games encompass both structured and unstructured activities undertaken by individuals to spend their leisure time, have enjoyable experiences, and enhance their physical and cognitive abilities (Ruckenstein, 1991). Another definition describes games as activities performed by participants based on predefined rules (Salen Tekinbas & Zimmerman, 2004; Akgül & Öztürk, 2004). With advancements in technology, internet networks, and social platforms, the concepts of sports and gaming have undergone significant transformations. Sports and games are now increasingly played on digital platforms. These digital developments have laid the foundation for the emergence of a new concept in contemporary society: digital gaming. Digital games are games played in an electronic environment through technological devices (Whittington, 2009).

Initially, digital games did not attract widespread attention; however, they gained popularity due to global health crises and technological advancements. The growing global interest in digital games has paved the way for the emergence of e-sports, a modern gaming phenomenon (Yükçü & Kaplanoğlu, 2018). E-sports refers to a form of digital gaming technology that allows individuals to engage in leisure activities, socialize with friends, interact with people from different cultures, and participate in competitive challenges through online networks (Lee et al., 2014). With its increasing popularity, e-sports has gained significant global traction. Millions of people participate in this digital platform as both players and spectators, contributing to its rapid expansion (Argan et al., 2006). Recognizing this growing market as a lucrative opportunity, major corporations have begun organizing large-scale tournaments with substantial prize pools to promote their products and services (Scholz, 2019). These developments have transformed e-sports into a major sports industry and a viable professional career path (Railsback & Caporusso, 2018).

E-Sports and Game Types

E-sports refers to computer-based gaming technology played on digital platforms, either individually or in teams, with variations depending on players' gaming preferences. These games encourage competition and rivalry among individuals and groups. The e-sports industry encompasses all stakeholders, from players to spectators (Jenny, 2016).

In recent years, the increasing popularity of e-sports games has provided individuals with diverse experiences depending on the type of game played (Yazıcı, 2018). Research has identified the most popular e-sports game genres as follows:

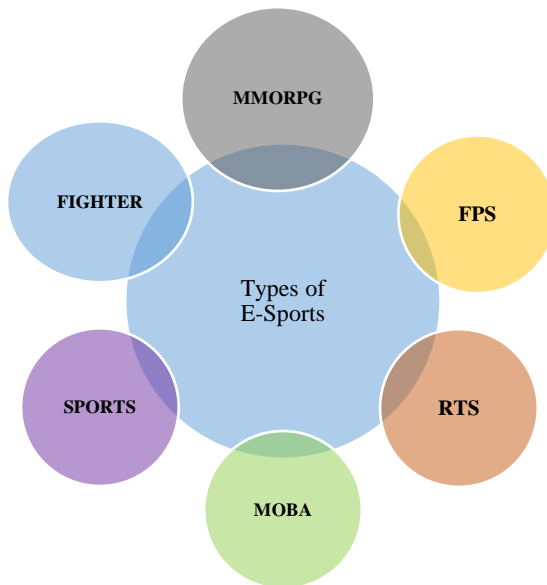


Fig 1. Types of e-sports (E-Sports Report, 2018)

- **Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA):** A team-based game genre in which players utilize technical, tactical, and strategic skills to gain an advantage over the opposing team. The primary objective is to destroy the enemy team's main base (Aslan, 2019).
- **First-Person Shooter (FPS):** A game genre where players control a character from a first-person perspective. FPS games contribute to players' physical and cognitive development by enhancing reaction time, coordination, and strategic thinking (Bellah, 2021).
- **Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG):** A multiplayer game where individuals collaborate as a team to complete various predetermined missions. This genre also provides opportunities for players to interact and communicate with other team members (Bellah, 2021).

- **Real-Time Strategy (RTS):** A strategy-based game played individually, requiring players to make real-time decisions based on evolving game situations. Effective management of pre-allocated resources is crucial for success. This genre enhances players' strategic thinking and problem-solving abilities (Magic, 2020).
- **Sports Simulation:** A digital adaptation of traditional sports, allowing players to engage in virtual representations of real-world sports such as football, basketball, and racing.
- **Fighting Games:** A genre where players compete against one another using pre-designed characters. The primary objective is to defeat opponents and achieve victory in one-on-one or team-based combat.

The History of E-Sports

The history of e-sports has evolved in parallel with the development of video games and technology. Initially shaped by arcade games and similar formats, e-sports have transformed into a highly competitive and professional gaming industry. With increasing interest and investment, e-sports have grown into a global industry.

The foundation of e-sports games began with the development and release of arcade games in 1977. The accessibility of these video games allowed individuals to play them at home, fostering a competitive gaming environment. However, during this period, there were no organized tournaments or structured competitions (Deen et al., 2006).

In the 1990s, advancements in internet networks enabled online gameplay, making multiplayer gaming more accessible. This development contributed to the emergence of competitive and skill-based gaming (Samur, 2018).

By the 2000s, e-sports had gained global recognition. Large-scale tournaments were organized, and e-sports began to gain momentum worldwide. Recognizing the growing popularity of competitive gaming, companies started sponsoring e-sports events to market their products and services. This shift laid the groundwork for the emergence of a new sports industry (Şenel et al., 2019).

Today, e-sports have become a major global industry. Millions of players and spectators actively participate in digital gaming events. As this industry continues to expand, e-sports have secured a significant position in the global sports and entertainment landscape (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2018).

- **Broadcasting Rights:** Digital platforms stream e-sports competitions live, allowing audiences from diverse backgrounds to access and watch the matches in real time. These broadcasting rights generate significant economic revenue, contributing to the overall growth of the e-sports industry.

Revenue Sources of E-Sports Players

The revenue sources for e-sports players include earnings from organized tournaments, sponsorship agreements, advertising revenue, profits from digital platforms broadcasting their competitions, and large prize pools in tournaments (Kocaömer, 2018).

The Ecosystem and Stakeholders of the E-Sports Industry



Fig 2. E-sports ecosystem (Pişkin et al., 2019).

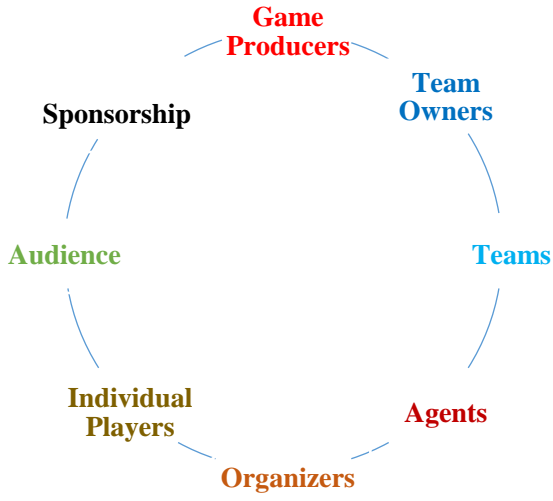


Fig 3. Stakeholders of the E-Sports Industry

Method

This study employed the document analysis method, which is one of the qualitative research approaches. Qualitative research offers the opportunity to deeply and holistically examine phenomena, individuals, institutions, and documents (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). Document analysis is considered the process of gathering and examining various written materials, documents, productions, or remnants that have been created by other individuals or institutions concerning the research topic (Seyidoğlu, 2016). The data were obtained from reports of institutional companies with global validity and presented in tabular form.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, data were obtained from reports reflecting the worldwide economic contributions of e-sports published by corporate companies such as AsoWorld, Financesonline, Newzo, Statista and Hubspotusercontent-nal.net between 2020-2024. The study examined various factors, including the age groups participating in e-sports, growth rates, the age ranges of viewers

following tournaments, the growth rate of e-sports by region, popular e-sports games, e-sports revenue sources, and the economic contributions of live streaming platforms. The data obtained from corporate companies were presented in graphical form for analysis.

Findings

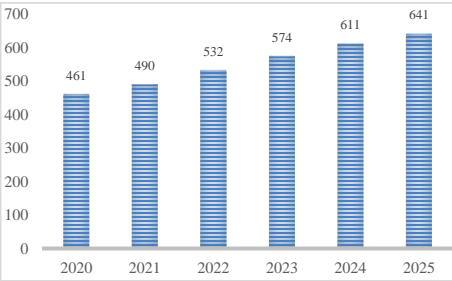


Fig 1. Global e-sports audience

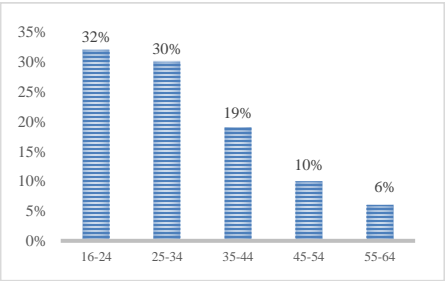


Fig 2. Age distribution of e-sports tournament viewers

The e-sports industry has experienced a continuous increase in its regular audience. In 2024, the global e-sports audience is estimated to have reached approximately 611 million. Considering the annual growth rate of this audience (Aso World, 2024), it is projected to reach 641 million by the end of 2025 (Figure 1).

The age group with the highest participation as viewers in e-sports tournaments falls within the 16-24 age range, while the 55-64 age group exhibits the lowest level of engagement (FinancesOnline, 2024). Several factors contribute to the strong interest of younger audiences in this digital gaming domain. These factors are shaped by individuals' physical, mental, and socio-cultural values. The competitive and challenging nature of e-sports games provides individuals with an opportunity to demonstrate their skills in this digital arena. Additionally, aspects such as high-reward tournaments, opportunities to interact with people from diverse cultures, emerging job models, and career prospects contribute to the increasing popularity and preference for these digital games among younger audiences (Figure 2).

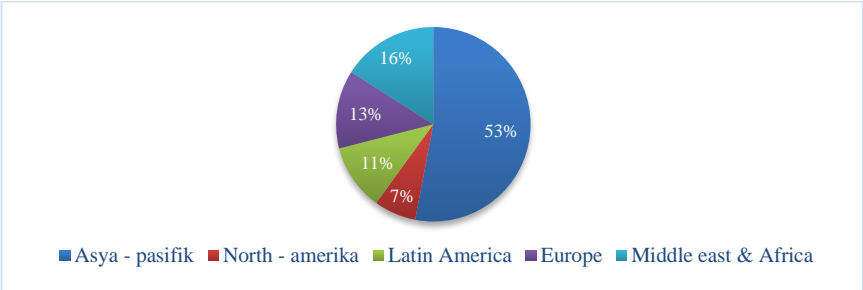


Fig 3. E-Sports players by region

E-sports games, which attract global attention across various demographics, continue to grow steadily. When examined on a regional basis, the Asia-Pacific region has the highest participation in e-sports, while North America exhibits the lowest engagement (Newzoo, 2024). In countries with large populations, such as South Korea, China, and Japan, computer-based video games have been played for a long time and are safeguarded by legal regulations. Additionally, in these countries, video games have evolved into a cultural phenomenon. In contrast, traditional games are more commonly preferred over digital games in North American countries.

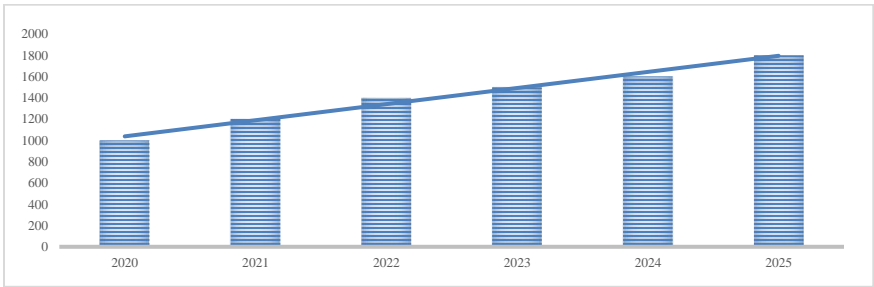


Fig 4. Global E-Sports Market Revenue (2020–2025)

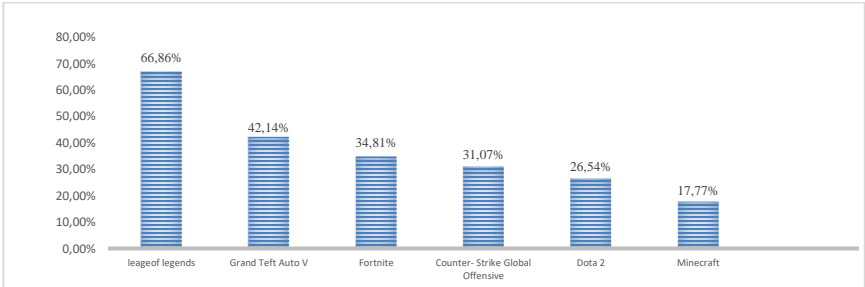


Fig 5. Most popular e-sports games

The development of internet networks and the impact of global health crises have led to an explosion in the e-sports industry, which is increasingly becoming a part of our daily lives. The estimated revenue for 2025 is expected to reach \$1.866.2 million (Statista, 2024). High-speed internet access, continuously evolving and changing gaming technologies, 5G technology, the broadcasting of e-sports games on social media platforms, sponsorship and advertising deals with global brands, major prize-money sports events, and the establishment of professional leagues are all driving the expansion of this industry and its market growth.

League of Legends is the most played game globally, while Minecraft is less preferred compared to other game types (Statista, 2024). Several factors contribute to the popularity of League of Legends. These include its accessibility without any cost, frequent releases of new versions and updates, its high level of competitiveness, the incorporation of multiple game strategies, and strong support from a wide audience. These elements play a significant role in the game's widespread popularity.

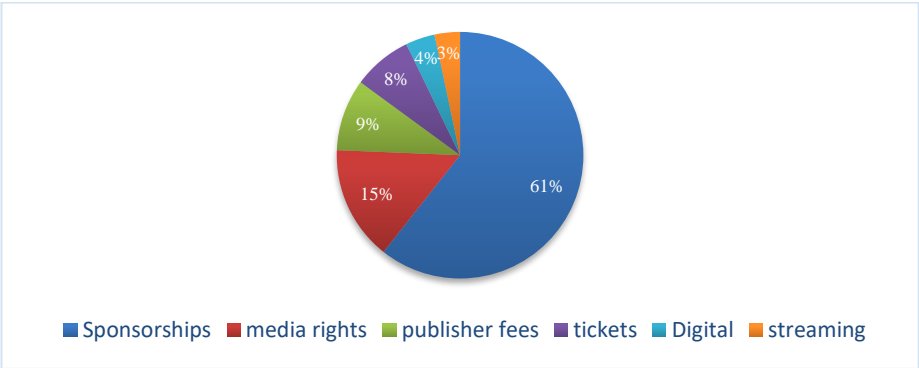


Fig 6. E-Sports revenue sources

When examining the revenue sources of e-sports games, sponsorship agreements have been identified as the largest contributor to market revenue (Statista, 2024). Various types of agreements are made to ensure that products and services reach their target audience. These revenues are expected to exceed \$1.07 billion by 2025.

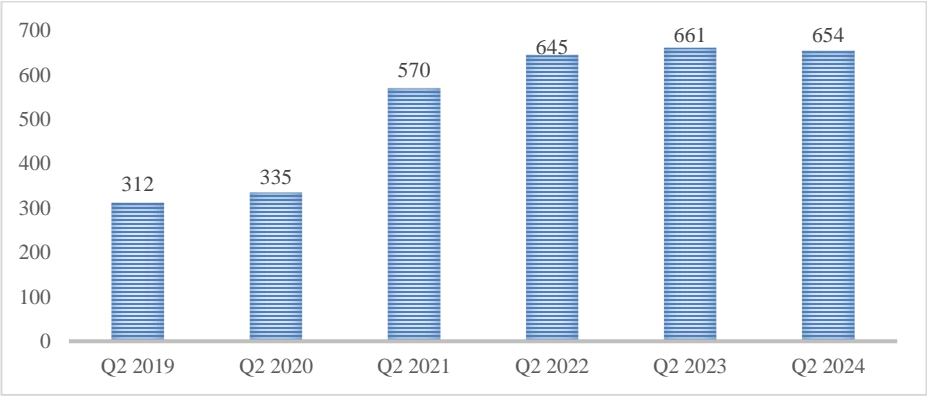


Fig 7. Live viewership rate of e-sports

There has been a continuous increase in the viewership rates of e-sports games over the years. However, in the second quarter of 2024, a 1% decline was observed due to various factors (Hubspot, 2024). This decline can be attributed to various reasons such as the lack of new and interesting games, the strengthening of individuals' connections with the outside world after the pandemic, and the increasing interest in traditional games. These situation have led to a decrease in interest in e-sports competitions watched on different platforms.

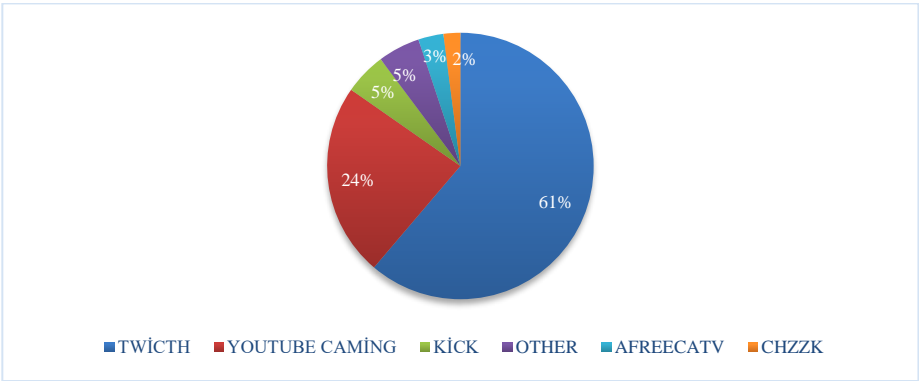


Fig 8. E-Sports live streaming platforms

Twitch is a digital platform that broadcasts music streams, creative content, and e-sports competitions. In 2024, Twitch has become the most popular digital platform for viewing e-sports games compared to other streaming platforms (Hubspot, 2024).

Result

With the development of computer networks and the increasing time individuals spend online, e-sports games have emerged as a new form of gaming, rapidly gaining popularity, especially among younger age groups. E-sports consists of computer-based video games in which individuals compete both individually and in teams in a virtual environment. E-sports has become a rapidly growing and increasingly prominent industry, one that now competes with traditional sports, thanks to global developments and both positive and negative changes in the world. Today, e-sports activities are recognized as a sport by many companies, institutions, and countries, fostering greater investments in this field. These games, which particularly attract the interest of younger audiences, open up new career opportunities for participants, both economically and professionally, while also enabling the emergence of new business models. With continuous development, e-sports games are experiencing constant growth through investments in advertising, sponsorships, ticket sales, broadcasting rights, and high-reward tournaments.

Author contributions

All authors contributed equally to the manuscript's conceptualization, editing, and finalization and are worthy of their inclusion as authors. The aspects of the study handled by each author are given below: T.M.: conception, design, supervision, fundings, analysis, literature review, writing; M.A.: conception, design, fundings, data collection, analysis, literature review and writing. All authors participated in drafting the manuscript and endorsed the final version.

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Ethnical statement

This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

ORCID

¹Talha Murathan 

²Murat Atay 

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From Boardrooms to Block Parties: A Case Study on The Economic and Cultural Transformation of the NFL Draft

Joshua S. Greer¹ 

Abstract

This case study investigates the economic impact and strategic implications of the 2025 NFL Draft hosted in Green Bay, Wisconsin-the smallest market in the National Football League. Despite attracting approximately 600,000 attendees, Green Bay generated lower economic returns compared to larger hosts due to dispersed lodging and limited walkability. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between market size and economic impact ($r = .81$) and a moderate correlation with attendance ($r = .67$). A multiple regression model ($R^2 = .798$) confirmed market size as a stronger predictor than attendance. Findings suggest that infrastructure capacity embedded within market classifications is a more robust driver of economic success, offering a refined framework for evaluating small-market potential in sport mega-event strategy.

Keywords

Economic impact, market size, NFL draft, sport mega-event

¹Department of Sport Management, Cumberland University, United States.

Introduction

The National Football League (NFL) Draft has evolved from a private, administrative procedure into one of the most celebrated and widely attended events on the league's calendar. First held in a hotel conference room in 1936, the NFL Draft was initially a modest affair focused solely on talent acquisition. However, over the past decade, it has undergone a dramatic transformation in format, function, and visibility. Today, the NFL Draft is a festival-style, multi-day celebration attracting hundreds of thousands of fans to major urban centers across the United States, with millions more engaging through digital platforms. This evolution represents not only a significant shift in how professional sports leagues interact with their fan bases but also emphasizes the NFL's strategic positioning of the Draft as a tool for economic development and tourism enhancement.

This transformation has yielded measurable economic outcomes and broader cultural significance. Cities such as Nashville (2019) and Detroit (2024) have hosted the NFL Draft with notable success, recording direct spending figures ranging from \$133 million to over \$213 million in economic impact (Visit Music City, 2019; Bizjournals, 2023; SportsTravel, 2024). The NFL Draft's appeal now transcends sport itself, drawing national attention to a city's brand, infrastructure, and hospitality offerings. Attendance figures have surged in recent years, peaking at 775,000 in Detroit and exceeding 600,000 in both Green Bay and Nashville—illustrating the NFL Draft's growing role in shaping sport tourism, urban planning, and fan behavior (NFL.com, 2024; ESPN, 2025). This case study investigates the NFL Draft's evolution into a cultural and economic phenomenon by evaluating its financial outcomes, patterns of fan engagement, market classification, and the strategic risks faced by host cities. In doing so, it positions the NFL Draft not merely as a league function, but as a multifaceted sport mega-event situated at the intersection of economic development and experiential fan engagement—critical areas of inquiry within contemporary sport management and urban studies.

From Hotel Ballrooms to Urban Spectacles

Since its inaugural event in 1936, the NFL Draft has undergone a dramatic evolution in both format and scale. Originally held in modest hotel conference rooms, the NFL Draft has been transformed into a large-scale, festival-style spectacle hosted in major outdoor urban venues. This shift has significantly

elevated the fan experience and visibility of the event. Recent attendance figures highlight the scope of this transformation. In 2024, Detroit welcomed a record-breaking 775,000 attendees over the course of the Draft, surpassing previous benchmarks set in Nashville in 2019, which drew more than 600,000 fans (NFL.com, 2024). These numbers highlight the NFL Draft's emergence as not only a key league event but also a major tourism driver and cultural celebration within host cities.

Economic Impact (2019–2025)

Over the past decade, the NFL Draft has evolved into a high-impact economic driver for host cities, generating substantial financial returns, enhancing civic branding, and fostering sustained tourism growth. A longitudinal analysis of the NFL Draft's economic outcomes from 2019 to 2025 reveals a pattern of increasing returns and broader community engagement, even amid challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2019 NFL Draft in Nashville set a new benchmark for success, drawing over 600,000 attendees and producing \$133 million in direct spending, resulting in a total estimated economic impact of \$224 million (Visit Music City, 2019). The following year, the 2020 Draft was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, marking the first time in league history the event occurred remotely. While the absence of fans meant no local economic stimulus, the event nonetheless demonstrated the NFL's adaptability and succeeded in maintaining national media engagement and sponsor visibility.

In 2021, Cleveland hosted the first hybrid NFL Draft, blending limited in-person attendance with virtual elements. This approach was a response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, allowing for a controlled number of fans and prospects to participate on-site while maintaining virtual engagement for broader audiences. The event featured socially distanced setups, health protocols, and a combination of live and remote broadcasts to ensure safety and inclusivity (Van Wagner Sports & Entertainment, 2021).

Building on this experience, the 2022 NFL Draft in Las Vegas marked a full-scale return to in-person festivities. Held at the Caesars Forum and surrounding areas on the Las Vegas Strip, the event attracted over 300,000 attendees over three days. Las Vegas leveraged its status as a global entertainment hub, incorporating elaborate stage designs, fan experiences, and live performances to create a memorable event (LVSportsBiz, 2022). The

success of the 2022 Draft demonstrated the NFL's ability to adapt and evolve its events in response to changing circumstances, setting a precedent for future large-scale sporting events.

By 2023, the NFL Draft's resurgence reached a new height in Kansas City, which generated an estimated \$164.3 million in economic impact, a result attributed to effective public-private partnerships, robust regional fan engagement, and urban infrastructure tailored for large-scale event execution (Bizjournals, 2023). The momentum continued in 2024 when Detroit hosted a record-breaking Draft, drawing over 775,000 attendees and producing an estimated \$213.6 million in economic impact. This historic achievement not only surpassed all previous Drafts in both attendance and financial return but also solidified Detroit's emerging reputation as a premier host city for major sporting events (SportsTravel, 2024).

In 2025, Green Bay, the NFL's smallest market, proved that economic success is not confined to major metropolitan areas. Approximately 600,000 attendees visited the city, and the event was projected to generate over \$100 million in total economic activity, including \$94 million statewide and \$20 million for Brown County alone (ESPN, 2025).

Collectively, these data points illustrate the NFL Draft's transformation into a powerful sport tourism phenomenon. Whether hosted by large urban centers or tradition-rich small markets, the NFL Draft continues to serve as a strategic asset for regional economic development, tourism enhancement, civic pride, and national visibility, demonstrating that cities of all sizes can successfully leverage this mega-event to catalyze economic growth, engage diverse stakeholders, and elevate their standing within the broader sports and entertainment landscape.

Fan Tourism and Economic Planning

The NFL Draft represents a pivotal event in the sports calendar, closely aligned with other mega-events in terms of fan tourism and economic planning. Its significance can be evaluated through various dimensions, such as economic impacts, competitive balance, and strategic planning, much like other high-profile sporting events.

The NFL Draft exhibits substantial economic ramifications similar to those observed for other mega-events, such as the Super Bowl or the World Cup. Baade and Matheson highlight that mega-events in sports generally promise significant economic benefits; however, the reality often reveals that these benefits are typically smaller than projected. This phenomenon also applies to the NFL Draft, where local economies benefit from increased tourism, ticket sales, and merchandise revenue during the event. Fan tourism is promoted as a vibrant aspect of the draft, bolstered by the excitement among supporters across different franchises, ultimately leading to economic spikes in host cities (Baade & Matheson, 2011).

In terms of competitive balance, the NFL Draft is designed to level the playing field among teams, enabling less successful franchises to gain access to top college talents. Lapré and Palazzolo's research illustrates that while the intent behind the draft system is to enhance competitive balance, the actual effect is ambiguous, raising questions about the efficacy of draft position correlating to team success (Lapré & Palazzolo, 2024). Similar to the analysis of other mega-events, the NFL draft aims to create a competitive landscape while fostering local fan engagement (Pitts & Evans, 2018).

Strategic planning underscores the role of the NFL Draft in economic and tourist development. Massey and Thaler (2005) discuss how the draft serves as a mechanism for talent acquisition but also highlights the complexities of decision-making under uncertainty, which can affect team strategies and, by extension, fan engagement strategies. This mirrors how cities plan for tourism influx during significant sports events, often leading to infrastructure investments and tourism campaigns designed to enhance the experience for visiting fans.

Recent technological advancements, notably the consideration of blockchain for managing NFL Draft trades, represent a forward-thinking approach similar to other industries adapting to digital transformation for efficiency and transparency (Fukuzawa et al., 2024). Teams increasingly rely on analytics and advanced decision-making tools for draft strategy, reflecting broader trends in the planning and execution of mega-events, where data analytics plays a key role in gauging fan participation and optimizing the visitor experience (Jackson et al., 2024).

The NFL Draft's alignment with other mega-events can be evaluated through its economic impact, competitive objectives, strategic developments, and modern technological adaptations, effectively enhancing fan tourism and aligning with economic planning principles seen in larger sports spectacles.

Smaller Markets

The selection of cities to host the NFL Draft, whether in small or large markets, reflects a strategic approach by the league aimed at strengthening its brand, managing competitive balance, and maximizing commercial opportunities. Locations such as Green Bay and Cleveland, representative of small markets, highlight the NFL's blend of tradition and regional identity, while larger cities like Las Vegas offer significant commercial advantages.

Small-market teams, including the Green Bay Packers and Cleveland Browns, have notable historical significance and engaged fan bases, which the NFL leverages during the NFL Draft. Hosting the event in these cities taps into local pride and enhances community involvement. The Packers' unique community ownership model and rich history contribute to a narrative that resonates with fans both locally and nationally, fostering inclusion and loyalty to the league. Furthermore, the NFL's approach to promoting competitive balance emphasizes maintaining parity among teams, irrespective of market size (Lapr   & Palazzolo, 2024). The NFL Draft not only enhances the fan experience but also contributes positively to the local economies, positioning these smaller markets as viable hosts for high-profile events.

Conversely, larger cities like Las Vegas present substantial commercial benefits due to their scale and infrastructure suited for significant events. Las Vegas has emerged as a leading entertainment destination, capable of accommodating large audiences and providing varied amenities (Yang et al., 2017). The economic impact of hosting the NFL Draft in these urban centers tends to yield significant financial advantages for both the NFL and the local business landscape (Gill & Brajer, 2011). This trend towards larger markets acknowledges changing demographics and aims to engage a wider audience.

Historical patterns within the NFL demonstrate that smaller markets have played a critical role in talent development and franchise success. The achievements of small-market teams underscore the league's commitment to competitive diversity and geographic inclusivity (Beyer et al., 2016). The NFL's selection of Draft host cities reflects a strategic balance-blending the

tradition and community identity associated with smaller markets with the commercial advantages offered by larger urban centers. This dual approach highlights the cultural value of small-market locations while leveraging the economic scale of major cities, ultimately supporting competitive balance and reinforcing the league's broader branding objectives amid a shifting professional sports landscape (Palmer et al., 2015; Harris et al., 2022)

Potential Risks

Hosting the NFL Draft presents both opportunities and challenges for prospective host cities. While the event offers substantial national exposure and the potential for economic stimulation, these benefits must be weighed against the inherent risks and logistical demands of large-scale event hosting. The draft draws widespread media coverage and attracts hundreds of thousands of fans, amplifying visibility for local businesses and cultural landmarks. However, such exposure is accompanied by considerable planning requirements, financial investment, and public safety considerations that can strain city resources if not properly addressed.

One of the most prominent advantages of hosting the NFL Draft is the significant increase in national media visibility, which can enhance a city's brand and stimulate tourism-driven economic activity. Cities often experience spikes in hotel occupancy, increased consumer spending in the hospitality sector, and heightened interest in local attractions (Maxcy, 2011). These economic gains may foster civic pride and community cohesion as residents embrace their city's elevated status in the national spotlight (Mulholland & Jensen, 2014). However, the event also introduces notable risks. Weather-related disruptions can compromise the success of outdoor festivities, particularly in cities with volatile climates (Joly & Dik, 2021). This may have contributed to the lower fan turnout when Cleveland hosted the NFL Draft in 2021 due to the cold and wet weather.

Furthermore, managing large crowds necessitates significant investments in security and public infrastructure to ensure safety (Jackson et al., 2014). Financial strain from unexpected costs, such as infrastructure upgrades or emergency services, may divert funding from essential public programs if not managed through careful budgeting and forecasting (Keefer, 2016).

Given these competing considerations, city officials must develop comprehensive risk mitigation strategies and collaborate closely with

community stakeholders when planning to bid for the NFL Draft. A thorough cost-benefit analysis, along with proactive planning, can help ensure that hosting the Draft yields sustainable long-term benefits. When implemented effectively, such events can strengthen local economies and foster community pride while minimizing the associated challenges. Therefore, the success of the NFL Draft as a host city opportunity hinge on a city's ability to balance ambition with preparation.

Data Analysis

A quantitative analysis was conducted to examine the economic determinants associated with hosting the NFL Draft. The analysis incorporated reported attendance figures, estimated economic impact (in millions), and market size classifications across six in-person NFL Draft events held between 2019 and 2025, excluding the 2020 virtual event. Host cities were classified as small, medium, or large markets based on metropolitan population and infrastructure capacity to contextualize their economic potential.

Descriptive statistics were used to highlight trends in attendance and financial outcomes over time. These data were supplemented by notable examples, such as the 2019 Draft in Nashville and the 2024 Draft in Detroit, to illustrate the increasing scope and influence of the event. Smaller markets, including Green Bay in 2025, were also examined to assess the NFL Draft's viability and impact in cities with fewer resources but high levels of community engagement and event infrastructure planning.

To explore relationships among market size, attendance, and economic impact, both correlation and multiple linear regression analyses were employed. Pearson correlation was used to assess the strength and direction of associations between variables, while multiple regression provided insights into the relative contribution of each predictor variable to overall economic outcomes. This mixed-method approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of how structural and contextual factors influence the economic returns of hosting the NFL Draft. The analysis informed broader discussions regarding event strategy, host city selection, and the growing cultural and financial relevance of the NFL Draft as a sport mega-event.

Market Size Classifications

Market size classifications were determined based on metropolitan statistical area (MSA) population and infrastructure capacity. Large markets are defined as cities with populations exceeding one million residents and possessing well-developed infrastructure capable of supporting high volumes of tourism. Notable examples include Detroit, Las Vegas, and Nashville. Medium markets typically have MSA populations ranging from 500,000 to one million and maintain solid tourism and lodging sectors, albeit on a smaller scale; Kansas City serves as a representative example. Small markets are characterized by MSA populations below 500,000 or limited infrastructure, yet they often hold distinct cultural or historical significance. Green Bay and Cleveland exemplify this market category (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023; U.S. Department of Transportation, 2022).

Table 1. NFL draft host city, attendance, and economic impact

Year	City	Attendance	Economic Impact	Market Size
2019	Nashville	600000	\$224.0 Million	Large
2021	Cleveland	150000	\$75.0 Million	Small
2022	Las Vegas	300000	\$130.0 Million	Large
2023	Kansas City	312000	\$164.3 Million	Medium
2024	Detroit	775000	\$213.6 Million	Large
2025	Green Bay	600000	\$100.0 Million	Small

With this framework in place, the relationship between market size, attendance, and economic impact was analyzed using both descriptive statistics and regression modeling.

Operationalizing

Because market size is a categorical variable with three levels (small, medium, and large), it was dummy coded for inclusion in the regression model. Small markets were designated as the reference category, as they represent the most resource-constrained contexts, allowing coefficients for medium and large markets to be interpreted relative to this baseline. Accordingly, two binary variables were created: one indicating medium markets (1 = medium, 0 = otherwise) and one indicating large markets (1 = large, 0 = otherwise). This approach permits each market size category to have its own estimated effect without assuming equal intervals between categories.

Findings

A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between market size and economic impact ($r = .81$), indicating that larger markets are generally associated with greater economic returns. A moderate positive correlation also emerged between attendance and economic impact ($r = .67$). This suggests that while attendance contributes to financial success, other factors—such as infrastructure, sponsorship, and city scale—play important roles in shaping overall outcomes.

To further examine these relationships, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using economic impact as the dependent variable and market size and attendance as independent variables. The model accounted for 79.8% of the variance in economic outcomes ($R^2 = .798$, Adjusted $R^2 = .664$), $F(2, 3) = 5.942$, $p = .0905$. While the model did not reach statistical significance at the conventional $p < .05$ level, likely due to the limited sample size, the results indicate a meaningful trend. Market size emerged as the more substantial predictor of economic impact ($\beta = 39.97$, $p = .105$), whereas attendance demonstrated a weaker and nonsignificant relationship ($\beta = 0.0001$, $p = .248$).

Descriptive data from six in-person NFL Draft events (2019, 2021–2025) illustrate the event's growing significance as an economic and cultural catalyst. For instance, the 2019 Draft in Nashville generated \$224 million in total economic impact (Visit Music City, 2019). Similarly, Green Bay—a small-market host in 2025—demonstrated viability by welcoming 600,000 attendees and generating over \$100 million in projected economic activity (ESPN, 2025). These examples collectively affirm the Draft's potential to function as a dynamic sport tourism asset, capable of stimulating regional economies and elevating civic branding.

Regression results reinforce this perspective, as market size exerted a stronger influence on economic outcomes ($\beta = 39.97$, $p = .105$) compared to attendance ($\beta = 0.0001$, $p = .248$). Although the limited sample size constrained statistical significance, the model explained a substantial proportion of variance in economic impact ($R^2 = .798$), suggesting that host city characteristics are key determinants of financial success. Correlation coefficients further support this conclusion, with market size showing a strong positive relationship with economic impact ($r = .81$) and attendance displaying a moderate correlation ($r = .67$). These statistical findings offer valuable insight into the structural and

contextual factors that shape the success of the NFL Draft. The following discussion interprets these results in the broader context of sport mega-event management, civic identity, and strategic planning.

Discussion

The transformation of the NFL Draft from a modest, behind-the-scenes administrative process into a highly produced sport mega-event reflects a deliberate strategic rebranding by the National Football League. This evolution has prioritized fan engagement, digital and multimedia integration, and the elevation of host city visibility. Key milestones in this trajectory include the fully virtual Draft held in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the hybrid model implemented in Cleveland in 2021, and the return to large-scale, in-person festivities in Las Vegas in 2022. These innovations laid the foundation for record-breaking editions such as the 2024 Draft in Detroit, which drew an estimated 775,000 attendees and generated \$213.6 million in economic impact (SportsTravel, 2024).

The findings from this study illustrate the multifaceted nature of hosting the NFL Draft. While large crowds can stimulate immediate tourism-related revenue, the underlying market classification of a host city, encompassing infrastructure readiness, lodging capacity, and commercial development, is more predictive of total economic impact. For instance, Green Bay's successful hosting in 2025 highlights the importance of community identity and fan loyalty in smaller markets, whereas Detroit's 2024 event demonstrated the economic leverage of a large, infrastructure-rich urban center.

Overall, the NFL Draft's strategic expansion into both small, medium, and large markets illustrates the league's pursuit of maximizing economic returns and promoting equitable geographic representation. Hosting the NFL Draft can generate not only tourism and national media exposure but also intangible benefits such as civic pride and social cohesion. However, these outcomes are accompanied by considerable logistical challenges and financial obligations. Therefore, potential host cities must conduct rigorous evaluations of their infrastructure, stakeholder readiness, and long-term strategic goals when considering a bid.

This case study both supports and extends existing research in sport economics. While Baade and Matheson (2011) have long argued that projected

economic benefits of mega-events are often overstated, the NFL Draft offers a more nuanced picture. The findings suggest that when infrastructure and market size are aligned with strategic planning, economic outcomes though variable can be substantial and measurable. Unlike much of the existing literature that focuses on singular, high-cost events like the Olympics or the Super Bowl, this study contributes new insights into second-tier sport mega-events that rely heavily on community engagement, fan mobility, and media integration. In doing so, it expands the scope of sport economics research to include events that are lower in public cost but still significant in regional impact, particularly for small and medium markets.

Limitations

This case study is limited by its small sample size, as only six in-person NFL Draft events between 2019 and 2025 were included in the analysis. The reliance on publicly reported economic estimates may also introduce variance due to differences in methodology across cities. Furthermore, the absence of primary stakeholder interviews constrains the qualitative depth of findings. These limitations emphasize the need for broader longitudinal studies and mixed-method approaches in future research.

Future Research

As the NFL Draft continues to evolve into a prominent sport mega-event, future research should expand beyond short-term economic outcomes to explore its broader and long-term impacts on host cities. Longitudinal studies examining return on investment (ROI) would provide critical insights into whether the initial economic boosts from hosting the NFL Draft led to sustained benefits, such as increased tourism, improved city branding, or enhanced infrastructure utilization. These studies could integrate indicators like hotel tax revenue, repeat visitor rates, downtown revitalization metrics, and community engagement outcomes across a five- to ten-year horizon.

Comparative analysis between NFL Draft host cities and non-host cities of similar market size and infrastructure could also reveal differential growth patterns, helping to isolate the Draft's unique influence. Moreover, qualitative research that captures stakeholder perspectives-including city officials, local business owners, and residents-could complement quantitative findings and

offer a richer understanding of community sentiment and perceived legacy effects.

Future research should also examine fan behavior in greater detail, particularly regarding travel motivations, spending habits, digital engagement, and post-event loyalty. As the NFL continues to rotate host cities, investigating whether and how fan engagement varies by market type (small vs. medium vs. large) or geographic region could inform both league strategy and municipal planning efforts. The upcoming Drafts in Pittsburgh (2026) and Washington, D.C. (2027) present timely opportunities for real-time data collection and comparative case studies.

In addition, more attention should be given to environmental and sustainability factors associated with large-scale events like the NFL Draft. Future studies might assess the environmental footprint of the event, the effectiveness of green initiatives implemented by host cities, and how sustainability messaging impacts public perception and legacy planning.

As emerging technologies continue to shape the sports landscape, research should monitor how innovations-such as augmented reality (AR) for fan experiences, and AI for predictive analytics-are integrated into the NFL Draft operations and fan interactions. Exploring the relationship between these technologies and fan satisfaction, sponsor ROI, or operational efficiency will be vital to understanding the NFL Draft's future trajectory as both an economic and cultural institution. By addressing these avenues, future scholarship can contribute to a more comprehensive and forward-looking understanding of the NFL Draft's role in sport management, urban development, and experiential marketing.

Conclusion

The transformation of the NFL Draft from a behind-closed-doors administrative function to a massive, fan-centric mega-event reflects a broader trend in professional sports toward experiential engagement and economic impact. Cities that host the NFL Draft increasingly view it as a high-profile tourism and branding opportunity, leveraging the event to boost local visibility, stimulate economic activity, and showcase their hospitality infrastructure. This evolution highlights the NFL Draft's unique ability to function simultaneously as a league marketing platform and a catalyst for urban development and civic pride.

However, the NFL Draft's significance extends beyond short-term financial gains. It aligns with the NFL's goals of competitive balance (Lapr   & Palazzolo, 2024), supports community identity in both small and large markets (Gill & Brajer, 2011; Beyer et al., 2016), and reinforces the sport's cultural relevance across diverse regions. Smaller markets like Green Bay demonstrate that history, tradition, and engaged fan bases can create powerful narratives that rival the commercial muscle of larger cities like Las Vegas (Yang et al., 2017). The league's market rotation strategy thus exemplifies a thoughtful balance between heritage and growth, allowing both economic and symbolic capital to circulate across its network of franchises.

Still, hosting the NFL Draft is not without risk. Cities must anticipate challenges ranging from weather disruptions (Joly & Dik, 2021) to public safety management (Jackson et al., 2024) and infrastructure costs (Keefer, 2016). As Baade and Matheson (2011) cautioned, the projected economic benefits of mega-events often fall short of expectations. Therefore, city leaders must engage in rigorous planning and stakeholder collaboration to ensure the long-term viability of hosting. Investments should not only support the event itself but also contribute to broader civic goals such as urban revitalization, tourism branding, and inclusive economic development.

The NFL Draft represents an evolving convergence of sport, commerce, and community identity. Its expanding scale and scope signal that it is no longer merely a sporting event but a multidimensional phenomenon with real implications for city planning, sport management, and fan culture. With effective planning and sustained research, particularly longitudinal and comparative studies, stakeholders can better understand how to maximize the Draft's value while mitigating its risks, ensuring it continues to serve as a strategic asset for cities and the NFL alike.

Author contributions

The author contributed to the manuscript's conceptualization, analyzed, editing, and finalization.

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This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

ORCID

¹ Joshua S. Greer 

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Evaluation of the Turkish Sports Management Structure from Past to Present

Alper Nas¹ 
Tekin Çolakoglu¹ 
Ömer Özbey² 

Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate the situation regarding Turkish sports organizations that were restructured under the Presidential government system. In this study, a screening design from qualitative research methods was used as a research model to describe the current situation. The rapid development of science, technology and communication in the 21st century and the rapid changes experienced accordingly and the increasingly difficult competitive conditions have led to the emergence of new management methods and understandings. Against this background, organizations need to change and reorganize. The development and developmental changes in public administration are also reflected in the structure of sports management. The Presidential government system can be evaluated as a reform movement within the framework of our country's New Public Administration understanding, and Turkish sports organizations were reorganized in accordance with the Presidential Decree No. 1. Our sports organization started with the Turkish Sports Federation in 1922 and has reached its current state by going through many stages. We believe that the results obtained will play an important role in the future institutional structure of youth and sports policy.

Keywords

Presidential government system, sports management, Turkish sports organization

¹Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Gazi University, Türkiye.

²Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Türkiye.

Introduction

Management refers to all activities in which concepts, principles, theories, models, and methods related to the functions of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling are systematically and consciously applied to achieve organizational goals effectively and efficiently (Baransel, 1979). Management science is the study of how management actually works. It is a social science field that evaluates the performance of individuals responsible for the preparation, execution, or implementation of decisions made by central and local political authorities (Tortop, 1999).

Sports management is understood as the rational, most effective, and efficient use of human and material resources in line with modern management principles and processes under the unique conditions of sports, to achieve the goals set by sports organizations (Yetim, 2019). The increasing number of sports activities, which align with individuals' existential purposes, reaching large audiences within society, institutionalizing within an organized structure, and achieving success all depend on effective organization (Turkay & Aydın, 2017).

Changes in social, political, cultural, and economic domains also affect sports organizations. Transformations within sports organizations are inevitable. The ever-changing and evolving global order necessitates that sports organizations remain open to various innovations and developments and adapt accordingly (Dolaşır, 2005). Therefore, analyzing and evaluating the sports organization from the Republican era to the present is considered significant. In this section, we will examine the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which is currently the highest decision-making body in Turkish sports, and its subordinate structure, the Turkish Sports Management Organization. The Ministry of Youth and Sports serves as the governing and operational body of Turkish sports (Gürsoy, 2014). This study aims to evaluate the historical development periods of sports management since the Republican era and analyze the transformation process of organizational structuring in sports administration.

Method

In this study, the scanning design, which is one of the qualitative research models that describe the current situation, was used to describe it as comprehensively and meticulously as possible by conducting literature review and document analysis. This design describes a past or current situation as it is and focuses on explaining the case, person or object that is the subject of the research with its internal and current situation (Karasar, 2014).

Historical Development of Turkish Sports Management

- **1922:** On July 14, 16 clubs merged to discipline sports and established the “(TİCİ)” - Turkish Sports Societies Alliance.
- **1936:** Establishment of the Turkish Sports Institution.
- **1938:** On June 29, the General Directorate of Sports was established with Law No. 3530.
- **1942:** With the enactment of Law No. 4235, the institutional structure was changed, and in 1960, it was reaffiliated with the Prime Ministry.
- **1969:** For the first time, sports affairs were handled at the ministry level. The Ministry of Youth and Sports was established under the 2nd Demirel Government (November 3, 1969).
- **1970:** İsmet Sezgin became the first Minister of Youth and Sports in the history of the Republic of Turkey.
- **1982:** On November 7, for the first time, sports were granted constitutional status, ensuring that sports and athletes were constitutionally guaranteed in Turkey.
- **1983:** Turkish sports, previously managed by the General Directorate of Physical Education, became part of the Ministry of National Education and Youth and Sports under Decree Law No. 179 on December 14, 1983.
- **1989:** In 1989, it was affiliated with the Prime Ministry and renamed the General Directorate of Youth and Sports.
- **2011:** The Ministry of Youth and Sports was established (This was decided by the Council of Ministers on June 3, 2011, based on the authority granted by Law No. 6223, enacted on June 6, 2011).

- **2018:** On July 10, 2018, with presidential Decree No. 1, published in the Official Gazette No. 30474, the general directorate of sports services was established within the ministry.
- **2020:** On May 13, 2020, with the Ministerial Approval No. 36, the Regulation on the duties, authorities, and responsibilities of the general directorate of sports services came into effect, and new department presidencies were established within the general directorate.

Turkey Sports Societies Alliance

Sports clubs from Istanbul and Anatolia, operating in 16 different sports disciplines within the country's sports organizations, jointly established the Turkish Sports Societies Alliance on May 22, 1922 (Ekenci & Serarslan, 1997). The primary goal of “TİCİ”, which was organized both centrally and provincially, was to cultivate physically and mentally healthy and conscious individuals, protect young people from harmful habits, develop strong and talented individuals, instill patriotism and national pride in all segments of society through sports activities and events, and represent the country in various sports disciplines on national and international platforms (Sümer, 1990; DPT, 1983). Efforts to organize youth and sports activities in Turkey began with the Turkish Education Association (Adatep et al., 2020).

Turkish Sports Institution

With the country's growing emphasis on sports administration, the Turkish Sports Institution was established on February 18, 1936, to manage the nation's sports activities for approximately two years. Its founding purpose was to implement a sports policy based on scientific and national values, ensure the widespread participation of all segments of society in various sports disciplines, and represent the country on the international stage (Fişek, 2003).

Table 1. TİCİ and TSK organizational structure

TİCİ (Turkey Sports Societies Alliance)	TSK (Turkish Sports Institution)
1. Central Organization	1. Central Organization
General Center	Grand Congress
Founders' Board	General Center
General Congress	Federations
Federations	2. Provincial Organization
2. Provincial Organization	Sports Regions
Central Board	Regional Congresses
Regional Training Boards	Agencies
Regional General Boards	League Committees
Sports Clubs	Sports Clubs
	Sports Homes

Resource (Özsoy et al., 2014).

General Directorate of Physical Education

Due to the developments and challenges experienced in Turkish sports during the TİCİ (Turkey Sports Societies Alliance) and TSK (Turkish Sports Institution) periods, the necessity for the state to manage sports in a more disciplined and structured manner emerged (Doğu, 2013; Fişek, 1980).

On June 29, 1938, Turkish sports were reorganized under Law No. 3530, and the administration was placed under the Prime Ministry. With the adoption of a new governance model, the General Directorate of Physical Education was transformed into a direct public institution (Tayga, 1990).

The organization consisted of the General Council, which included the Central Advisory Board, Central Disciplinary Board, and Athlete Health Board, as well as federations, main units, auxiliary units, advisory units, regional presidencies, regional executive committees, regional advisory boards, institutional offices, and physical education offices in district and village levels, along with sports clubs (Doğar, 1997; Fişek, 1998; Sunay, 2009).

Table 2. TSK and BTGM organizational structure

TSK (Turkish Sports Institution)	BTGM (General Directorate of Physical Education)
1. Central Organization	1. Central Organization
Grand Congress	General Directorate Boards
General Center	• Central Advisory Board
Federations	• Central Disciplinary Board
2. Provincial Organization	• Athlete Health Board
Sports Regions	Federations
Regional Congresses	Main Units
Agencies	Auxiliary Units
League Committees	Advisory Units
Sports Clubs	2. Provincial Organization
Sports Homes	Regional Presidency
	Regional Executive Board
	Regional Advisory Board
	Agencies
	District, Subdistrict, and Village Physical Education Presidencies
	Clubs

Resource (Özsoy et al., 2014).

In 1938, the General Directorate of Physical Education was established under Law No. 3530 within the Prime Ministry. Over the years, its administrative affiliation changed as follows:

- **1942:** Transferred to the Ministry of National Education
- **1960:** Moved back under the Prime Ministry
- **1970:** Became part of the newly established Ministry of Youth and Sports
- **1983:** Integrated into the Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sports (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019)

Table 3. Ministry of Youth and Sports (1970) organizational structure

Ministry of Youth and Sports (1970)	
1. Ministerial Office	3. Provincial Organization
Undersecretary	Regional Presidency
Deputy Undersecretary	Regional Executive Board
Private Secretary	Regional Advisory Board
General Directorate of Physical Education	Agencies
General Directorate of Higher Education Credit and Dormitories	District, Subdistrict, and Village Physical Education Presidencies
Presidency of the Sports Betting Organization (Spor Toto)	Clubs
2. Central Organization	Youth Sports Academies
General Directorate of Education	
General Directorate of School Sports (OBESGM-School-Based Physical Education and Sports)	
General Directorate of Youth Services	
General Directorate of Youth Issues	

Resource (Özsoy et al., 2014).

General Directorate of Youth and Sports

On May 28, 1986, under Law No. 3289 on the Organization and Duties of the General Directorate of Physical Education and Sports, it was established as a central institution under the Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sports. The law allowed for the creation of provincial and regional directorates, each with its own budget, and the General Directorate of Physical Education and Sports, which had legal personality and a secondary budget.

- **1989:** The institution maintained this status until it was restructured under Decree Law No. 356 and reassigned to the Prime Ministry, where it was renamed the General Directorate of Youth and Sports.
- **2011:** No significant changes were made to its organizational structure until this year (Turkay & Aydın, 2017)

The main service units of the central authorities of the General Administration are as follows: the Sports Department, the Facilities Department, the Health Affairs Department, the Physical Education Department, the Youth Services Department, the Sports Organization Department, and the Sports Activities Department.

The advisory and control units of the Directorate include research planning and coordination, sports controller, legal consultancy, and the auditing committee.

The units affiliated with the General Administration are: the Defense Expertise Department, the Personnel Training Department, the Foreign Relations Department, and the Administrative and Financial Affairs Department.

The permanent committees of the General Administration consist of the Central Advisory Board, the Youth and Sports Committee, the Central Disciplinary Board, the General Directorate of Penitentiaries, and Provincial Disciplinary Boards.

The provincial organization of the Directorate is managed by the Provincial Youth and Sports Directorates in each province and the District Youth and Sports Directorates in each region. An auxiliary body of the General Council is the Gambling Toto Board of Directors (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2021).

Table 4. General Directorate of Youth and Sports organizational structure

General Directorate of Youth and Sports			
Main Service Units	Advisory and Supervisory Units	Auxiliary Units	Affiliated Units
Presidency of Sports Federations	Presidency of the Inspection Board	Directorate of Personnel and Training	Directorate of Sports-Toto-Lottery Organization
Directorate of Facilities	Legal Consultancy	Directorate of Administrative and Financial Affairs	
Directorate of Health Affairs	Directorate of Research, Planning, and Coordination	Directorate of Foreign Relations	
Directorate of Sports Training	Sports Inspectors	Defense Specialist	
Directorate of Youth Services			
Directorate of Sports Organizations			
Directorate of Sports Activities			

Resource (GSM, 2006).

Ministry of Youth and Sports (2011 - 2018)

The Ministry of Youth and Sports was established with the aim of emphasizing the provision of services for youth and delivering these services effectively and comprehensively, by the Decree Law No. 638, dated June 3, 2011, and was published in the Official Gazette No. 27958 on June 8, 2011. With the establishment of the Ministry, the General Directorate of Youth Services, the General Directorate of Planning and Coordination, and the General Directorate of Education, Culture, and Research were founded, and youth issues began to be addressed in various ways (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019).

With the establishment of the Ministry, the General Directorate of Youth and Sports was renamed as the General Sports Administration, initially responsible solely for sports management. The General Directorate of Sports, the General Directorate of Higher Education Credit and Dormitories, and the TOTO Sports Organizations Presidency became affiliated organizations under the Ministry. Additionally, youth service offices in provinces and district and provincial sports directorates were established under the General Directorate of Sports.

When reviewing the Ministry's responsibilities, duties, and powers, it is fully authorized to provide the necessary infrastructure for young people and all Turkish citizens to engage in sports, spread sports culture to the grassroots level, and establish the required facilities. It is also responsible for conducting necessary research to improve sports performance, increasing sports activities and events regardless of regional and provincial boundaries, and supporting education and projects aimed at the development of youth in various fields (Yılmaz, 2020).

With the transition to the presidential government system, the Presidential Decree No. 1 on the Organization of the Presidency, dated July 10, 2018, was published in the Official Gazette, and the General Directorate of Sports was assigned the name "General Directorate of Sports Services." The General Directorate of Higher Education Loans and Housing Facilities was merged with the Ministry of National Education's central structure under the name "General Directorate of Credit and Housing Facilities," creating new service units. Additionally, the only regional organization within the Ministry is the Youth and Sports Regional Directorate. Since 2018, the most notable changes in sports have been in the organizational structure; this has affected the key service units and affiliated organizations. Furthermore, only the TOTO Sports Organization Presidency continues to maintain this status. As a result, the number of departments has increased to 8. Another significant change is the creation of 4 deputy ministers, and the status of the deputy minister will be abolished (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019).

The Sports Clubs and Sports Federations Law No. 7405 (2022)

In Turkey, where sports have historically existed as state-supported activities, legal provisions related to sports have evolved in response to contemporary needs. Concerns that the financial difficulties faced by sports clubs and companies engaged in sports activities could negatively impact Turkish sports led to the enactment of Law No. 7405 on Sports Clubs and Sports Federations on April 26, 2022. With the implementation of this law, a new chapter in Turkish sports governance commenced. The law introduced comprehensive administrative, legal, and penal regulations covering all aspects of Turkish sports, thereby restructuring the sports system.

The Law No. 7405 on Sports Clubs and Sports Federations has been evaluated within the framework of public policy, problems in sports management have been identified and reasonable solutions have been proposed. This law is concrete evidence of the ideological and structural changes that the Ministry of Youth and Sports has made institutionally since 2018. Ministry officials, scientists and all other stakeholders have noticed the problems and have rearranged the current sports legislation in line with the requirements of the age, but have not abandoned it completely. The public interest, which is the ultimate goal of public policy, is expected to be achieved with the enactment of the Law No. 7405 on Sports Clubs and Sports Associations (Çolakoğlu, Özbey & Doğan, 2022).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study takes the decision to bring sports under state control after 1938 as the starting point for the TİCİ period of Turkish sports and uses a chronological literature review method to directly examine and evaluate the organizational structure of institutions affiliated with central and provincial governments.

The organizational structure of Turkish sports management has changed over time, depending on political considerations. After 1938, it became evident that the entire sport system was run by state-affiliated institutions, including three organizations: the General Directorate of Youth and Sports the Sports General Directorate, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Due to changes over time in the Turkish sports organization, significant developments have been made. These include the increase in ministry representation, the coordination of activities for youth and sports, and the resolution of issues stemming from the previous organizational structure, such as the uncertainty in the distribution of authority and responsibility between central and provincial organizations.

Yılmaz stated that the reason for the restructuring was to have the authorities carried out under one roof and to increase the representation power of the Turkish sports organization (Yılmaz, 2020).

Sunay, regarding the problems experienced in the field of sports management, said; The desired level of specialization in the sports management profession has not yet been reached in our country. It is seen that there are people from different professions in the institutions or organizations that need to work and employ in this field (Sunay, 2002). However, it is believed that the changes made over time in the sports organizational structure have had some negative effects, such as making the bureaucratic structure more cumbersome and reducing its dynamism. Additionally, the removal of the undersecretary position and the increase in the number of deputy ministers, along with external appointments, could potentially lead to structural problems within the bureaucracy and cause difficulties in the implementation of activities and programs.

The restructuring of the sports organization has brought with it some structural problems (Erturan & Şahin, 2017). Regarding the differences

between the structure of Turkish sports organizations restructured under the presidential government system and the parliamentary system, the research results show that top-level managers generally express concerns about administrative reforms but acknowledge that these reforms have had a positive impact on management. They also express worries that restructuring might increase bureaucracy. However, the results indicate that the majority perceives the changes following the new governance model in a positive light (Yılmaz, 2020).

In the study; it was stated in the research conducted on changing the status quo of independent sports federations in the restructured Turkish sports organizations that independent sports federations should be restructured. It was revealed that the financial structure and revenues, administrative structure and management, legislation, and the relationship of sports activities with sports events need to be reconsidered. Some managers believe that federations should be given more support in terms of financial structure and income regulation, while others argue that federations should remain financially independent. Similarly, there are managers who believe federations should be included under central management, while others maintain that they should be entirely independent. However, managers agree that federations should have better oversight and should increase and promote sports activities.

In Yılmaz's study, it was determined that in the open-ended responses given by the participants in the research conducted on the budgets of Turkish sports institutions in the context of the Presidential Government System, the managers generally evaluated the transition of the General Directorate of Sports from a special budget to a general budget positively. This situation was evaluated in terms of increased allocations, accountability, higher budgets, and greater efficiency. However, some managers pointed out that bureaucracy would increase and the advantages of the special budget would diminish (Yılmaz, 2020).

The research was found to be largely consistent with other studies. Managers place particular importance on budget control and the rational and efficient use of financial resources, which indicates the negative aspects of the special budget. In the new management system, it is believed that the Ministry of Sports' budget will be managed centrally, allocations will increase, the budget will be more accountable, the budget will be used more efficiently, resources allocated to youth and athletes will increase, and investments in social sports

facilities and sports organizations will rise.

Based on the information obtained from the relevant legislation and literature, the research concludes that there have been significant changes in the organizational structure of the Ministry restructured during the Presidential Government System. These changes were particularly viewed positively by top-level managers. However, it is also stated that changes need to be made regarding the current management, financing, and sports oversight regime for sports federations within the Ministry.

In conclusion, after the fundamental changes in the Turkish sports organization restructured under the presidential government system, increasing ministry representation, consolidating authority and budgets under a single entity, ensuring coordinated execution of youth and sports activities, and eliminating the uncertainty in the distribution of duties and responsibilities between central and provincial organizations are of great importance.

Author contributions

All authors contributed equally to the manuscript's conceptualization, editing, and finalization and are worthy of their inclusion as authors. The aspects of the study handled by each author are given below: A.N: conception, fundings, materials and process, writing; T.Ç.: conception, design, supervision, analysis, literature review and critical review. Ö.Ö.: fundings, materials and process, writing. All authors participated in drafting the manuscript and endorsed the final version.

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ORCID

¹Alper Nas 
²Tekin Çolakoğlu 
³Ömer Özbey 

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Economic Reflections of the Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation Processes of Athletes Affiliate to Sports Clubs: An Interdisciplinary Review

Büşra Yılmaz¹ 

Abstract

This literature review aims to examine the results of scientific studies conducted to date under the title of sports injuries, both their effects on the athletic performance of athletes and their changes on the financial stability of sports clubs from an interdisciplinary perspective. The study is founded upon a thorough review of extant literature. In the course of preparing the review, a number of databases were searched, including Google Scholar, PubMed, and ResearchGate. The following Turkish keywords were used: sports economics, rehabilitation, injury prevention and sports clubs. The same keywords were also searched for in their English equivalents. The following subjects will be covered: sports economics, rehabilitation, injury prevention, and sports clubs. The present study exclusively encompasses publications in Turkish and English. The findings emphasise the pivotal role of strategic approaches to load management and injury prevention, not only in optimising athlete performance but also in their substantial ramifications for the economic landscape of sport. In this context, the study emphasises that the prevention of sports injuries should not be regarded solely as a health issue, but also as a fundamental component of sports economics.

Keywords

Injury prevention, rehabilitation, sports clubs, sports economics

¹Department of Physical Education and Sport, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Gazi University, Türkiye.

Introduction

The concept of sport is not confined exclusively to physical performance and related indicators; rather, it represents an industrial phenomenon encompassing economic, cultural, and various social dimensions (Smith and Stewart, 2015). In the contemporary sporting landscape, professional sports clubs, which are evaluated within a professional framework, have shifted their focus beyond the pursuit of talented athletes to achieve high-level success. Instead, there is a tendency to adopt scientific approaches in training methodologies, to make strategic plans regarding health management, and to implement economically sound decisions to support long-term investments (Taylor et al., 2022). Consequently, injuries sustained by athletes, in addition to the subsequent processes of returning to the field and undergoing rehabilitation, have the potential to engender various disruptions in the planning strategies of clubs and in the career development trajectories of the athletes themselves. In addition to being significant health-related challenges, these issues are also regarded as threats to the financial sustainability of sports clubs (Drawer and Fuller, 2002).

Athletic injuries constitute a substantial problem for the sports industry, given the associated direct and indirect costs. The treatment required during the recovery period, as well as the rehabilitation process necessary for an athlete's return to the field, not only result in athletes being absent from competition for extended periods but also impose financial burdens on sports clubs. These include ongoing salary expenses, loss of performance, medical treatment costs, and potential cancellations of sponsorship agreements. When considered specifically in the context of professional sports clubs, it becomes evident that such injuries can be a critical factor influencing seasonal success (Häggglund et al., 2013).

Rehabilitative practices and injury prevention efforts, which fall within the scope of sports sciences, should not be evaluated solely from the perspective of health sciences. From a sports economics perspective, these practices should also be regarded as strategically important elements. The economic dimension of sport necessitates an interdisciplinary approach, encompassing physiotherapy methods, training sciences, athlete monitoring techniques, and data-driven load management (Jones et al., 2019). These contemporary

practices serve as the scientific foundation of the process, fostering collaboration across various disciplines. Such multidisciplinary approaches have been shown to be effective in maintaining athlete health and performance and they also play a significant role in reducing the financial burdens and potential losses faced by sports clubs (Bahr and Krosshaug, 2005).

The aim of the conducted study is to evaluate the applicability of both preventive and rehabilitative practices developed to protect athletes from injuries and harm in sports clubs, as well as to assess their economic impacts on sports clubs from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Method

The present study constitutes a literature review. During the preparation of the study, the keywords sports economics, rehabilitation, injury prevention and sports clubs were searched in Turkish, and sports economics, rehabilitation, injury prevention, and sports clubs were searched in English using the databases Google Scholar, PubMed, and ResearchGate. The review exclusively encompassed publications in Turkish and English. The literature search in the databases started on February 3, 2025 and ended on May 4, 2025. A total of 49 studies were included in the study, those that were compatible with the title methodology of the study.

Discussion

The Economic Evaluation of Sports Injuries

In the field of professional sports, injuries sustained by athletes are not merely viewed as a loss in performance; they are a matter of significant concern. This issue is regarded as a critical problem with serious economic consequences. This economic process has been analysed by sports economists and can be examined under two main categories: direct costs and indirect costs (Drawer & Fuller, 2002).

Direct Costs

The topic of direct costs includes the medical treatment methods athletes are subjected to, their rehabilitation processes, and the compensation items that need to be paid to the athlete during this period. Especially in professional sports clubs, it is known that the individualized and comprehensive healthcare services required during the rehabilitation of an injured athlete constitute a significant portion of club budgets.

Moreover, even if a professional club athlete does not receive a match-based payment, their seasonal salary continues to be paid, making it a non-productive expense for the club, as it provides no return (Ekstrand et al., 2011). In a comprehensive study conducted by Ekstrand and colleagues, UEFA reported that professional football clubs in Europe spend, on average, around 20 million euros annually due to injuries. However, they emphasized that this cost was not simply due to the player's absence from the match, but rather because the injured player's absence negatively affects team performance, which in turn impacts revenue generation (Ekstrand et al., 2011).

Indirect costs

The topic of indirect costs encompasses broader economic processes. These include reductions in sponsorship revenues and merchandise and ticket sales, as well as negative impacts on brand value due to declining team performance and reductions in broadcasting revenues (Gabbett, 2016). Long-term injuries to a team's highest-scoring players, in particular, can significantly weaken the team's competitive presence on the field, lead to reduced fan engagement and result in decreased media visibility.

In addition, the need for rapid and unexpected transfers due to injuries, the impact of substitute players on performance and deficiencies in on-field strategic planning are also examples of indirect costs (Schwellnus et al., 2016). These situations suggest that evaluating professional sports clubs solely in terms of athlete health may not be the most appropriate approach. It is therefore essential to consider the club's risk factors from multiple perspectives. To ensure the organisation's sustainability, a holistic approach to risk management is more appropriate.

Strategic Approaches and Areas of Implementation for the Prevention of Sports Injuries

In professional sports clubs and environments where athletes train and compete, the importance of treating and preventing sports injuries is significant in terms of both economics and athletic performance. Modern sports clubs take professional precautions against potential injuries by integrating science-based, multidimensional approaches into their training systems with the aim of minimising injuries (Gabbett, 2016).

Proper planning of training load

One of the greatest risk factors for athlete injury is the training load applied. Designing training sessions that are appropriately and methodologically sound is one of the most important strategies for preventing injury. Sudden increases in training intensity over a short period of time and failing to assess the athlete's previous training session (e.g. recovery time) can lead to the athlete exceeding their physiological tolerance and increase the risk of injury (Chan et al., 2024). The science-based explanation for this situation is the “Training-Injury Prevention Paradox” model, which suggests that injuries can occur at both low and high training volumes. According to the model, the most important strategic approach to preventing this is proportional and progressive loading (Gabbett, 2016). In addition, to properly manage training load, it is considered more accurate to base injury risk modelling associated with sudden increases in load on scientific principles, using assessment criteria such as the Acute:Chronic Workload Ratio (ACWR) and similar metrics (Blanch & Gabbett, 2016).

Balance training and functional strength

Studies have shown that training programmes targeting specific muscle groups, especially neuromuscular training plans that support balance development, significantly reduce the incidence of sports injuries. The “FIFA 11+” programme, developed by FIFA, has been found to result in a reduction of approximately 30% in injuries to athletes in both amateur and professional groups (Soligard et al., 2008).

Injury prevention approaches focus not only on increasing physical strength, but also on enhancing defensive mechanisms such as movement control, flexibility, proprioception and balance.

Data-Based monitoring systems in preventive interventions

The importance of technology-supported, data-based practices aimed at protecting athlete health is increasingly recognised today (Bartels et al., 2024). Modern tools such as GPS-based load monitoring systems, heart rate monitoring devices, thermal imaging technologies and force assessment platforms now make it possible to scientifically define and track processes such as creating personalised athlete load profiles, measuring fatigue levels and monitoring potential injury risks (Schwellnus et al., 2016).

Evaluating the Economic Impact of Sports Clubs' Prevention and Rehabilitation Processes for Sports Injuries

Preventing athlete injuries and developing related strategies are important not only for athlete health, but also for the sustainability of economic policies in sports clubs. The positive outcomes of these programmes can be analysed in terms of short-term cost savings and their potential long-term benefits for organisational planning (Finch, 2006).

Reducing Healthcare Costs for Sports Clubs

By reducing the severity and frequency of athlete injuries, club expenditures related to medication, physiotherapy and treatment costs decrease directly (Turnbull et al., 2024). A study conducted with the Norwegian Football Federation found that football teams that regularly implemented the FIFA 11+ protocol experienced a 37% improvement in their club budgets (Soligard et al., 2010). This can give amateur or semi-professional sports clubs with limited financial resources a significant advantage.

The Impact of Performance Continuity on Revenue Growth in Sports Clubs

By preventing athlete injuries, club teams can increase their chances of achieving sporting success throughout the season by keeping their best players on the field. This definition of success also encompasses areas such as sponsorships, ticket sales and broadcasting revenues. Conversely, long-term injuries to key players can lead to a decline in media interest, resulting in a significant loss of visibility for the club's brand (Ekstrand et al., 2013). For these and similar reasons, integrating injury prevention programmes into training methods helps sports clubs reduce expenditure and supports consistent and sustained athletic performance. This, in turn, can form the basis of a strategic plan to increase revenues.

Long-Term Planning and Return on Investment

The economic analysis process and evaluations of the return on investment for expenditure on athlete injury prevention programmes have yielded highly positive results. In a 2006 study by Finch, it was calculated that for every dollar

invested in injury prevention interventions, approximately three dollars were saved. This return was found to be even more striking in sports clubs working with young athletes (Finch, 2006). Reducing athlete injuries can help to extend athletes' careers, enabling clubs to benefit from their investments for longer (Schwellnus et al., 2016).

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the visible emergence of economic fragility in the sports sector has forced a reckoning with the fact that the financial structures of sports clubs depend largely on athletic success and the current health status of athletes. This makes the evaluation of injury prevention processes even more critical. A 2021 study stated that the pandemic created a devastating economic burden, particularly for small and medium-sized sports clubs, and that the suspension of sporting activities made managing athletes' healthcare expenses nearly impossible (Skinner & Smith, 2021).

Result

The injury process experienced by athletes is not just a physical obstacle, particularly within professional sports organisations. It also constitutes a significant economic risk factor for sports clubs. The costs arising from injuries result in performance and time losses for athletes, creating a financial imbalance that negatively impacts the economic stability of sports clubs. Therefore, it is important to recognise that training programmes that integrate sports technology and strategic plans designed to minimise injury risk are crucial not only for maintaining athlete performance, but also for supporting the economic sustainability of sports clubs.

A scientific review has clearly demonstrated that managing training load, implementing data-driven monitoring systems and applying neuromuscular-based exercise programmes can significantly reduce the risk of sports injuries and lower sports clubs' expenditure. Programmes such as FIFA 11+ have been found to prevent a substantial number of injuries at relatively low cost. Furthermore, a well-planned training load management strategy combined with personalised, up-to-date monitoring systems for athletes supports both athlete health and the economic sustainability of sports clubs by taking a more holistic approach. Based on the information obtained from the review, the following recommendations can be made to readers:

- Both amateur and semi-professional sports clubs with limited budgets, as well as professional sports clubs, can implement long-term injury prevention programmes for athletes that go beyond short-term treatment approaches.
- Sports clubs can conduct cost and outcome analyses of injury prevention programmes for athletes and use the results of these analyses to inform investment decisions.
- Pre-season training plans can take the balance of acute and chronic loads into account, and regular data sharing between coaches and healthcare teams can be implemented to systematically monitor athlete health.
- In amateur sports clubs, injury prevention programmes can be standardised to support athletes in leading healthier lives during and after their sporting careers.

The integration of new, up-to-date strategies into the training process has made approaches to athlete health more proactive. Recent studies show that injury prevention programmes are not only related to athlete health, but also closely tied to the economic stability of sports clubs (Turnbull et al., 2024).

For this reason, sports clubs are now analysing individualised load tracking supported by artificial intelligence, which has allowed even standard warm-up protocols to change (Bartels et al., 2024; Chan et al., 2024). Finally, it is important to understand that sports science and sports economics are interrelated areas that occupy a cross-disciplinary intersection, rather than separate fields. These fields are crucial for both club performance and financial planning. Thanks to technological advances in scientific evaluation, athlete health can be assessed with greater accuracy, while financial losses can also be minimised.

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ORCID

¹Büşra YILMAZ 

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