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# The relationship among narcissism, Machiavellianism and happiness of female football players

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#### Abstract

**Objective**: this study aims to examine Turkish female football players' narcissistic personality traits' relationships with their Machiavellian personality traits and their happiness levels. **Method**: the research group of this study consists of 290 female football players (age=21.68±3.37) who are playing in the Super League, 2. League, and 3. League in Turkey. Besides the demographic variables in the study Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13 (NPI-13), Machiavellian Scale and Happiness Scale were used as data collection tools. One-was ANOVA and Pearson Correlation analysis were used to analyze the data collected from the participants. **Results**: the findings showed that there was a significant difference between the averages of the participants according to the leagues they played and their income. There was a significant, positive and high relationship between Narcissism and Machiavellianism and a significant, positive and moderate relationship between Narcissism and Happiness. **Conclusion**: it was determined that the Machiavellian personality traits and happiness levels of female athletes increased with the increase in their narcissistic personality traits. In addition, it has been revealed that the Machiavellian personality trait levels of female athletes who play in a higher league and earn more money are higher than the others.

Keywords: women's Football, narcissism, Machiavellianism.

# Introduction

Women's football is developing day by day in Turkey. Since 2006 the women's football leagues in Turkey have been played uninterrupted until today (TFF, 2012). In order to contribute the development of women's football in Turkey, the Women's Super League was established in 2021-2022. This league consists of 24 women's teams (TFF, 2021a). Due to the new rule of UEFA, clubs who don't have a women's football team won't be able to participate in the Men's UEFA Champions League in the 2023-2024 season (T24, 2022). Therefore Turkish Super League clubs like Altay, Atakaş Hatayspor, Çaykur Rizespor A.Ş., Fenerbahçe A.Ş., Galatasaray A.Ş. and Trabzonspor A.Ş. established women's football teams in the year 2021 (Yılmaz Oruç, 2021; TFF, 2021b,c).

Hereby a serious competition situation has arisen in this league and winning the championship race has become a more important factor compared to the past. Due to their will to win the matches, some athletes may not follow the rules of fair play. It is determined in the literature that athletes who have narcissistic and Machiavellian personality traits tend to compete with the thought of "every way is permissible to win", ignoring the feelings of others due to their ambitions to win (González-Hernández et al., 2020; Nicholls et al., 2017; Nicholls et al. 2020; Şahinler & Ersoy, 2021; Ueno et al., 2017;). Besides winning and being successful it is proven that people who participate in sport gain happiness (Collins et al., 2018; Downward & Rasciute, 2011; Huang & Humphreys, 2012; Ravari et al., 2020).

#### Narcissism

Narcissism is one of the oldest personality constructs in the history of psychology. The origin of this term is a story in Greek mythology, in which a young man named Narcissus is punished with an insatiable love for himself (Heißenberger & Haider, 2020). While defining this personality trait, the features of the mythological figure Narcissus were used. The literature reveals that narcissistic personality traits can be described as a self-loving appearance, inflated self-views and self-esteem (Brown et al., 2009; Heißenberger & Haider, 2020; Rohmann et al., 2012; Wright & Edershile, 2018).

Narcissism is also a popular topic in sport sciences because sport and narcissism are able to fit very well together. For example, there are some athletes who are known for their narcissistic personality traits. One of this athletes is the famous footballer Zlatan Ibrahimovic. Ames (2016) wrote an article about him and his "19 best quotes". Some of this quotes are: "Only God knows… You're talking to him now" and "I came like a hero, left like a legend" (Ames, 2016). This quotes can be characterized as narcissistic. At the same time there are more examples of narcissistic quotes by athletes, like Ronaldo: "It's surely because I'm good-looking, rich and a great footballer. They're jealous of me. I don't have any other explanation (planetfootball.com, 2019), and Floyd Mayweather: "I don't feel that no fighter has the mental or physical agility to match Floyd Mayweather" (Bradford, 2015).

As it can be seen in the literature, there are many researches on narcisstic personality traits of athletes and sports fans (Jones et al., 2017; Matošić, 2017; Matosic et al., 2016; Woodmann et al., 2011; Yaşar & Sunay, 2017). A big part of this studies concentrate on the relationship between narcissistic personality traits and performance (Roberts et al., 2013; Roberts et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2019; Vaughan & Madigan, 2021; Zhang et al., 2020).

#### Machiavellianism

For some sources, Machiavellianism means political unscrupulousness. The term derives from the name of the Italian philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) (Quandt, 1998). In psychology Machiavellianism belongs with narcissism and psychopathy to the "Dark Triad Traits" (Furnham et

al., 2013). Therefore it can be said that Machiavellianism and narcissism are similar in some aspects (Gala et al. 2020). Christie and Geis (1970) describe Machiavellianism as a personality trait characterized by relatively low affective involvement in interpersonal relationships, manipulative, and low attachment to conventional moral concepts. For Heißenberger and Haider (2020) Machiavellians have often cynical and selfishness views. Sport is a suitable area for people with Machiavellian personality traits because of its competition levels and the ambition to win. González-Hernández et al. (2020) discovered in their study that the dark personality traits of competitive athletes are related to the individuality of them, to the self-perception of their psychological response and the competitiveness of their sporting environment.

Except this Vaughan and Madigan (2021) found out in their study that the Dark Triad Traits narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy are positively associated with sport task performance. As proven in this studies, it can be said that narcissistic and Machiavellian personality traits are common in the sports area.

In this context, the aim of this study is to examine Turkish female football players' narcissistic personality traits' relationships with their Machiavellian personality traits and their happiness levels. For this reason answers were sought to the following questions:

- 1. Is there a significant relationship among Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Happiness?
- 2. Is there a significant difference between the educational level, monthly income, the league of the female footballers and Narcissism?
- 3. Is there a significant difference between the educational level, monthly income, the league of the female footballers and Machiavellianism?
- 4. Is there a significant difference between the educational level, monthly income, the league of the female footballers and Happiness?
- 5. Is there a significant relationship between the ages of the female footballers and Narcissism?
- 6. Is there a significant relationship between the ages of the female footballers and Machiavellianism?
- 7. Is there a significant relationship between the ages of the female footballers and Happiness?
- 8. Is there a significant relationship between the sports age of the female footballers and Narcissicm?
- 9. Is there a significant relationship between the sports age of the female footballers and Machiavellianism?
- 10. Is there a significant relationship between the sports age of the female footballers and Happiness?

# Method

#### Research model

In this study a quantitative research method, the correlational survey model was used. The correlational survey model aims to determine the existence of co-variation between two or more variables (Karasar, 2012).

#### Participants

The sample group of this study consists of 290 female football players (age=21.68 $\pm$ 3.37) who are playing in the Super League, 2. League, and 3. League in Turkey. The mean of the sports age of the participants is 11.69  $\pm$  5.52. The group was selected with the convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is a type of nonrandom sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility are included suitable for the purpose of the research (Etikan et al., 2016).

	Variables	(f)	(%)	
Educational Level	Primary/Secondary Education	101	34.8 65.2	
	High Education	189		
	Low	93	32.1	
Monthly Income	Middle	184	63.4	
	High	13	4.5	
	Super League	75	25.9	
League	2. League	59	20.3	
	3. League	153	53.8	
Age		M=21.68±3.37		
Sports Age		M=11.69 ± 5.52		

 Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the participants.

#### Data collection tools

In this study, four tools were used to collect data. The first tool include questions on age, educational level, monthly income, league and sports age of the participants. The other data collection tools are presented below.

#### Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13 (NPI-13)

Developed by Gentile et al. (2013) and adapted into Turkish by Doğan and Çolak (2020) was used to determine the narcissism levels of the participants. This scale consists of 13 items and the scale items are in a 5 point Likert form, from *Absolutely disagree* (1) to *Absolutely agree* (5). This scale has a 3 sub-dimensions: Leadership/Authority, Grandiosity/Pretentiousness, Claiming/ Exploitation. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency of the original scale is 0.82.

#### Machiavellian Scale

Developed by Dahling et al. (2009) and adapted into Turkish by Ülbeği (2016), was used to determine the Machiavellianism levels of the participants. This scale consists of 16 items. The scale items are in a 5 point Likert form from *Absolutely disagree* (1) to *Absolutely agree* (5). This scale has a 7 sub-dimensions: Moral Deprivation, Distrust of Others, Desire for Control, Desire for Status, Narcissism, Job Satisfaction, The Intention to Leave the Job. The internal consistency coefficient of the original scale amounted to 0.86.

#### Happiness Scale

Developed by Demirci and Ekşi (2018), was used to determine the happiness levels of the female athletes. This scale consists of 6 items. The scale items are in a 5 point Likert form from *Not suitable for me at all* (1) to *Totally suitable for me* (5). This scale has a single sub-dimension structure. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency of the original scale amounted to 0.83.

#### Data collection and analysis

Data collection was carried out via Google Forms. SPSS 21 program was used to analyze the data collected from the participants. According to the obtained kurtosis and skewness values (Narcissism: 0.78; Machiavellianism: 0.84; Happiness: 0.84) it was decided that the data showed normal distribution for each independent variable. Frequency and percentage analyzes were used in the creation of descriptive tables regarding the variables. The reliability value of the research data was tested with Cronbach Alpha value. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of this research was founded 0.88 for the whole scale. After that One-Way ANOVA analysis and Pearson Correlation were used to analyze data.

#### Findings

Scales	Number of Items	Ν	Х	Sd	Skewness	Kurtosis	Min	Max	Cronbach Alpha
Narcissism	13	290	3.55	0.60	0.12	0.24	1.83	5.00	0.78
Machiavellianism	16	290	2.80	0.59	0.54	1.52	1.00	5.00	0.84
Happiness	6	290	3.92	0.67	0.67	0.51	1.83	5.00	0.84

 Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the variables.

Table 2 shows that the arithmetic mean of the total scores of the participants from the Narcissism Scale is 3.55, the arithmetic mean of the total scores of the participants from the Machiavellian Scale is 2.80, and from the Happiness Scale is 3.92. The standard deviation of the participants' mean scores from the Narcissism Scale is 0.60, the standard deviation of the participants' mean scores from the Machiavellian scale is 0.59 and from the Happiness Scale is 0.67. The lowest and highest scores the participants gained from the Narcissism Scale are 1.83 and 5, the lowest and highest scores the participants gained from the Machiavellian Scale are 1 and 5 and from the Happiness Scale are 1.83 and 5. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency of the

Narcissism Scale is 0.78, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency of the Machiavellianism, and Happiness Scale is 0.84.

Scales	Groups	Variables	Ν	Х	Ss	р	Difference
Narcissism		Super League	75	3.35	0.49	_	
	League	2. League	59	3.32	0.57	_	
		3. League	156	3.23	0.05	0.271	-
Machiavellianism		Super League	75	2.98	0.56		Super League > 3. League
	League	2. League	59	2.82	0.64	0.006*	
		3. League	176	2.71	0.06		
		Super League	75	3.87	0.64		
Happiness	League	2. League	59	4.10	0.64		
	0	3. League	176	3.88	0.05	0.073	-

Table 3. ANOVA results of the League variable.

*p <	0.05.
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The ANOVA results of the footballers by the league variable are presented in Table 3. The ANOVA results by the league variable indicate that the 'Machiavellianism' scores differ significantly (F=5.19; p<0.05). The mean scores of the participants playing in the 1st league were higher than the mean scores of the participants playing in the 3rd league. In conclusion, as the league level rises, there is an increase in Machiavellian personality traits.

 Table 4. ANOVA results of the Income variable.

Scales	Groups	Variables	Ν	Х	Ss	р	Difference
Narcissism	Income	Low	93	3.27	0.60	_	
		Middle	184	3.26	0.51	0.163	-
		High	13	3.57	0.74		
Machiavellianism		Low	93	2.82	0.66		High > Middle, Low
	Income	Middle	184	2.76	0.52	0.006*	
		High	13	3.28	0.67		
		Low	93	3.93	0.67	0.116	
Happiness	Income	Middle	184	3.89	0.66	0.110	-
		High	13	4.29	0.61		



The ANOVA results by the income variable presented in Table 4 indicated that the 'Machiavellianism' mean scores of the participants differ significantly according to the income variable (F=0.81; p<0.05). It was determined that the mean scores of the participants with high income were higher than the mean scores of the participants with medium and low income. In other words, as the income level rises, there is an increase in Machiavellian personality traits.

As a result of the One-Way ANOVA analysis, it was revealed that there was a significant difference between the averages of the participants according to the leagues they played and their income.

	Narcissism	Machiavellianism	Happiness
Age	-0.21	-0.017	0.034
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.721	0.769	0.566
N	290	290	290

 Table 5. Pearson correlation results of the age variable.

The Pearson correlation results of the age variable are presented in Table 5. The results indicated that there wasn't a significant correlation between the age variable and the mean scores of the scales (p>0.05). It can be said that there is a non-significant, negative and low relationship between the age variable, Narcissism and Machiavellianism. There is also a non-significant positive and low relationship between the age variable and Happiness.

 Table 6. Pearson correlation results of the mean scores of scales.

	Narcissism	Machiavellianism	Happiness
Narcissism	1	0.537**	0.319**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Ν	290	290	290

\*p < 0.05.

Correlation analysis was used to o examine Turkish female football players' narcissistic personality traits' relationships with their Machiavellian personality traits and their happiness levels. As it can be seen in Table 6 the analyze results showed that there was a significant, positive and high relationship between Narcissism and Machiavellianism (r= 0.537, p<0.01), and a significant, positive and moderate relationship between Narcissism and Happiness (r= 0.319, p<0.01).

In conclusion, as the narcissism personality traits of the football players increase, there is an increase in their Machiavellian personality traits and their happiness levels.

# Discussion and conclusion

The findings obtained in the study suggest that the scores of participants in narcissism and happiness did not differ at significant levels according to the league, income, age and sports age variables. The results showed also that there wasn't a significant difference in the Machiavellianism mean scores of the participants according to position, age and sports age.

The income of the female football players could depend on the league they play. Easterlin et al. (2010) found out that happiness and income go together and that happiness falls in economic contractions and rises in economic expansions. Despite this, Koşan (2015) stated that the narcissism levels of the participants who have a high monthly income; are higher than those with low monthly income. This results are not similar to the findings of the obtained study.

Frijters and Beatton (2012) reported also that there is almost no change in happiness between the ages of 20 and 50. Considering the fact that the mean age of the participants in this study is 21.68, it can be said that these results are similar to the results of our study. Besides this, Wilson and Sibley (2011) stated that there are age-related differences in narcissism, and Barlett and Barlett (2015) investigated that there is a relationship between age and the Dark Triad traits. This findings are not similar to the findings of our study.

The sports age is related to the participation in sports. Huang and Humphreys (2012) reported that people gain happiness from participation in sports. Spano (2001) stated that narcissism associated with greater physical activity. Sabouri et al. (2016) investigated that the Dark Triad traits were associated with physical activity. This findings are not similar to the findings of our study.

But there was a significant difference in the Machiavellianism mean scores of the participants according to league and income variables. In conclusion, as the league level and income rise, there is an increase in Machiavellian personality traits. The Türkcell Turkish Women's Super League has a serious competition atmosphere and winning the championship race has become a more important factor compared to the past. Especially because big sports clubs like Galatasaray Istanbul, Fenerbahçe Istanbul and Trabzonspor established women's football teams in the year 2021. Big companies like Türkcell, McDonalds and Avon are sponsoring the süper league and some of the teams which are competing in this league (AA, 2021; Avon, 2017; TFF, 2020). Therefore it can be said that money plays a more important role in the higher leagues then in the lower leagues. It has been determined in the literature that money has a negative effect on attitudes towards ethical behavior therefore the Machiavellian personality traits increase, too. Kurniawan and Anjarwati (2020) and Hamzah et al. (2021) investigated that the love of money has a negative effect on the ethical perceptions of students.

Due to the correlation results it can be said that there was a significant, positive and high relationship between Narcissism and Machiavellianism and a significant, positive and moderate relationship between Narcissism and Happiness. As the narcissism personality traits of the football players increase, there is an increase in their Machiavellian personality traits and their happiness levels. In psychology, Machiavellianism narcissism and psychopathy belong to the "Dark Triad Personality Traits" (González-Hernández et al., 2020). As a result, it can be said that Machiavellianism and narcissism personality traits are similar in some ways and might influence each other. It is also proven in the literature that Narcissism has a positive effect on happiness. Joshanloo (2021) examined that people high on narcissism endorsed generally positive notions of happiness. Łojan (2021) stated that narcissism is a positive correlate of happiness.

In addition, González-Hernández et al. (2020) reported that the competitive environment in sports is highly correlated with the characteristics of the dark personality traits. Narcissism is associated with the desire to win and the fear of losing, Machiavellian tendencies are higher in athletes who feel like they are going to lose the competition. Besides this, Nicholls et al. (2020) investigated that the Dark personality traits are positive associated with attitudes towards cheating and doping.

In conclusion, it was determined that the Machiavellian personality traits and happiness levels of female athletes increased with the increase in their narcissistic personality traits. In addition, it has been revealed that the Machiavellian personality trait levels of female athletes who play in a higher league and earn more money are higher than the others. The competitive environment of sports events and the desire to win the matches reveals the Machiavellian personality traits. especially those with narcissistic personality traits.

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