

Original article. The relationship between career termination anxiety and hope level of academy football players. Vol. 11, n. ° 3; p. 1-28, Julio 2025. <https://doi.org/10.17979/sportis.2025.11.3.11880>

The relationship between career termination anxiety and hope level of academy football players

La relación entre la ansiedad por el final de la carrera y el nivel de esperanza de los futbolistas de la academia

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Abstract

For children and young people around the globe, pursuing a career in football represents a cherished hope. The present study sought to examine the relationship between career termination anxiety and the level of hope of players in the academies of professional clubs in Türkiye. Additionally, the study aimed to identify any differences in these relationships according to a number of independent variables ($n = 933$; $Age_{Mean} = 15.58 \pm 1.5$). The study was conducted between September and October 2024. The fit of the data with the scales was tested with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Non-parametric tests were applied to analyze the data that did not show normal distribution. The findings indicated that academy players exhibited a moderate level of career termination anxiety ($3.20 \pm .59$) and a high level of hope ($6.57 \pm .86$). It was determined that various variable were effective factors on career termination anxiety and hope level. The present study revealed a negative correlation between fear of early career termination and hope level. Nearly all children and adolescents hope to become a professional football player. However, only a small percentage of them achieve this goal. Consequently, after the current study, it is imperative to identify the factors that trigger career termination anxiety in children engaged in football training at academies. This will enable the preservation of hope in some while preventing the negative consequences of anxiety in others.

Keywords: football, football academies, career termination anxiety, hope

Resumen

Para los niños y jóvenes de todo el mundo, seguir una carrera en el fútbol representa una preciada esperanza. El presente estudio pretendía examinar la relación entre la ansiedad ante la finalización de la carrera y el nivel de esperanza de los jugadores de las academias de los clubes profesionales de Turquía. Además, el estudio pretendía identificar cualquier diferencia en estas relaciones según una serie de variables independientes ($n = 933$; Media de edad = 15.58 ± 1.5). El estudio se realizó entre septiembre y octubre de 2024. El ajuste de los datos con las escalas se comprobó con el Análisis Factorial Confirmatorio (AFC). Se aplicaron pruebas no paramétricas para analizar los datos que no mostraban una distribución normal. Los resultados indicaron que los jugadores de la academia presentaban un nivel moderado de ansiedad ante la finalización de su carrera ($3.20 \pm .59$) y un nivel alto de esperanza ($6.57 \pm .86$). Se determinó que diversas variables eran factores eficaces sobre la ansiedad ante la finalización de la carrera y el nivel de esperanza. El presente estudio reveló una correlación negativa entre el miedo a la finalización temprana de la carrera y el nivel de esperanza. Casi todos los niños y adolescentes esperan convertirse en futbolistas profesionales. Sin embargo, sólo un pequeño porcentaje de ellos logra este objetivo. En consecuencia, tras el presente estudio, es imperativo identificar los factores que desencadenan la ansiedad por el cese de la carrera en los niños que se entrenan en academias de fútbol. Esto permitirá mantener la esperanza en algunos y evitar las consecuencias negativas de la ansiedad en otros.

Palabras clave: fútbol, academias de fútbol, ansiedad por el fin de la carrera, esperanza

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Introduction

Known as the “game of the worlds” or the “chess of the green field,” football is undoubtedly the most popular sport in the world, attracting the masses (Ferreira, 2021; Robles-Palazón et al., 2022). It goes beyond being a game both on an individual and national scale and is identified with concepts such as entertainment, power, happiness, sadness, excitement, identity, status, and more (Butler et al., 2025). Football, which has attracted great attention worldwide from the past to the present, has almost become the universal language of societies (Nuriddinov, 2023). Boniface (1998) defined football as much more universal than democracy and economy, which are seen as borderless concepts, and stated that it should be the most universal phenomenon of today. Among the reasons for this situation is the industrialization of football rather than entertainment and games (Yiapanas et al., 2024). Developments in the last thirty years have caused football to become a major industry in the modern era (Tettamanzi et al., 2024). The World Cup, which was organized by FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), the football boss, is seen as the beginning of industrialization. With the touches made, the organizational structure, rating, and financial dimension of the tournament have taken the industrial aspect of football to a higher level. Another development is the “Champions League” tournament organized by UEFA (Union of European Football Associations), which is responsible for managing football in Europe. The changes in the most interesting tournaments of football have brought the industrial aspect of modern football to the forefront (Yılmaz, 2020). The great changes experienced in industrial terms have also led to differences in the meaning and importance of football for people (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2004). Today, football is seen as the easiest way to become rich, famous, and gain high social status (Uehara et al., 2021). Therefore, being a football player means much more than being a professional due to the popularity, fame, reputation, and prestige it brings.

Football has a fan base of around 3.5 billion people. From Europe to Asia, from Africa to America, it is followed with passion and enthusiasm all over the world. This popularity is not limited to just following football. More than 265 million people play the game (AEON, 2023). Among those who play, many children hope to become a professional football player. Some of them take the first step to realize their dreams by

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starting football in a club's academy (Rosas & Gerrard, 2014). There are many factors that trigger young people's hopes of becoming a football player. The main one is the financial rewards that everyone agrees on (McGuigan et al., 2024). People who become professional football players at the highest level earn a level of economic income that cannot be achieved in a normal profession (Uyar et al., 2022). Therefore, becoming a football player is a real dream for children to lead a prosperous life for themselves or their families. In some continents, it even goes beyond an individual endeavor and turns into a social struggle for hope (Ungruhe & Esson, 2017). For example, African players who leave their country to pursue a career in football see this as a way to escape poverty in their communities. In this way, they intend to correct negative situations in their regions by earning high levels of earnings abroad (Acheampong, 2020). In addition to economic factors, another factor that pushes young people to become football players is to achieve high social status and fame (Acheampong et al., 2024). These factors can be considered as the main factors that encourage young people to turn to football. Of course, there may also be other factors that encourage young people to become football players. When all these factors come together, the biggest hope for children and young people is to become the footballers of the future. While some realize their dreams at the highest level, others struggle in the lower leagues. Many children and young people's football careers may end before their dreams begin.

A football career can be defined as a journey in which the individual development of footballers is at the forefront and blended with sporting achievements (Acheampong, 2021). Football careers are classified according to the status (amateur, professional) or league level (local, regional, national, and international) (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007). It is a process in which players start playing football and continue through various stages until they retire from the green field (Wylleman et al., 2004). Career termination is characterized as the most traumatic event that athletes are likely to face (Wilkinson, 2021). It is generally stated that football players end their careers between the ages of 31-35 (Carapinha et al., 2019). However, this age range may vary from country to country. During this process, they may be exposed to various negative situations. Intense training, psychological strain, pressure, stress, and expectations are the main ones that cause anxiety in football players (Ma, 2024). Especially in football players who have difficulty

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managing their careers, this anxiety creates concern that their career will end (Özkan et al., 2024). Therefore, it is possible to define career termination anxiety as the anxiety of football players whose careers have started or are continuing to end their careers due to various reasons. Similar feelings are experienced by children and young people who are at the beginning of their careers. Because it is stated that less than 1% of children who enter an academy at the age of 9 only realize their dream of becoming a professional football player (ERTHEO, 2025). In fact, even this rate can be considered as a cause of career termination anxiety in prospective football players. In general, there are a number of results in the literature on the causes of football career termination anxiety. However, there is no research on the extent to which this situation affects the hope of children and young people to become football players. As in every part of the world, the hope of every child and youth playing football in Türkiye is to become a professional football player. For this reason, the possibility of career termination anxiety affecting the level of hope in prospective football players who start in the academy of a professional club in their city or who are selected for these clubs has led to the idea of conducting the current research.

Method

Purpose and Type of the Study

The present study aims to examine the relationship between career termination anxiety and the hope level of prospective football players who play in the academies of professional football clubs in Türkiye. In line with this purpose, the study was designed using a descriptive and relationship scanner type in accordance with the survey model, one of the quantitative research methods.

The Study Questions

- What is the level of career termination anxiety among academy football players?
- What is the level of academy football players' hope?
- Is there a relationship between career termination anxiety and the hope level of academy football players?

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Population and Sample

The study population consists of football players playing in the academies of professional football clubs in Türkiye in the 2024-2025 season. Based on the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) records, 16.462 players were registered in 139 professional clubs as of the 2024-2025 season. Using the sampling calculation method with a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error, 376 people were considered sufficient. Questionnaires were sent to all clubs. Considering the inclusion criteria stated below, the study was completed with 933 academy players who completed the questionnaires accurately and completely and met the criteria ($n = 933$).

Inclusion Criteria

- Football license must be registered for the 2024-2025 season,
- Playing in the academies of professional clubs,
- Being between the ages of 15-19
- Being a Turkish citizen
- Volunteering to participate in the research.

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form, Career Termination Anxiety Scale in Athletes (CTASA), and Continuous Hope Scale (CHS) were used to collect the data.

Personal Information Form: It is a form consisting of sociodemographic characteristics of academy football players and a total of eleven questions that are considered necessary for the research.

CTASA: The scale was developed by Özkan et al. (2024) to measure the career termination anxiety levels of licensed athletes. The scale, which consists of a five-point Likert type, has 22 items and three sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions are as follows: “Depersonalization”, ‘Fear of Early Career Termination’ and ‘Career Completion Desire’. The scores that can be obtained from the scale are evaluated at the level of sub-dimensions. It is interpreted that the higher the scores, the higher the career termination anxiety of the athletes. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients calculated for the sub-

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dimensions were .863, .899, and .823, respectively (Özkan et al., 2024). CFA was conducted to test the fit of the scale with the data collected from academy football players. Firstly, when the 3-factor structure of the scale was analyzed, it was seen that some fit indices were not within the desired reference range. When the factor loadings were analyzed, it was seen that the factor loading (.229) of the 4th statement in the “Career Completion Desire” sub-dimension was below the desired limit. Accordingly, the question with low factor loading was removed, and the proposed modifications were examined. Then, covariances were drawn between the proposed modifications, and the analysis was repeated. As a result of the analysis, it was understood that the fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 4.95$; RMSEA = .06; CFI = .90; AGFI = .89; GFI = .91) were within the desired limits and the 3-factor structure of CTASA was confirmed. The findings revealed that the factor loadings obtained from the scale sub-dimensions ranged between .406 and .774. The AVE (.37; .43; .33) and CR (.82; .87; .66) values exceeded the desired limits, and Cronbach alpha coefficients reached .87 for the overall scale and .83, .87, and .60 for the sub-dimensions, respectively. These results demonstrated that the scale was valid and reliable for this study.

CHS: It was developed by Snyder et al. (1991) and adapted into Turkish by Tarhan and Bacalı (2015). The scale consists of 12 items, an eight-point Likert type, and has two sub-dimensions named “Alternative Ways Thought” and “Initiative Thinking”. There are four statements measuring each sub-dimension. Four items were determined as filler statements that were not related to the characteristic of hope. The total score of the scale is evaluated over eight items representing the sub-dimensions. The lowest score to be obtained from the scale is 8, and the highest score is 64. A high score means that the individual has a high level of hope. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined by test-retest method. Accordingly, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient calculated for the overall scale was found to be .86, while it was reported to be .78 for the “Alternative Ways Thought” sub-dimension and .81 for the “Initiative Thinking” sub-dimension (Tarhan & Bacalı, 2015). CFA was conducted to test the two-factor structure of the scale. When the analysis was first applied, it was understood that the fit values were not within the desired limits. Therefore, the fit indices were examined, and modifications were suggested. When the modified structure was tested again, it was understood that the

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fit values ($\chi^2/df = 2.60$; RMSEA = .04; CFI = .98; AGFI = .98; GFI = .99) showed perfect fit, and the two-factor structure of the CHS was confirmed. The results showed that the factor loadings in the subscales of the CHS ranged from .462 to .694, and the AVE (.41; .35) and CR (.74; .68) values were above the desired levels. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total scale was found to be .82, while it was found to be .73 and .70 for the sub-dimensions. The results showed that the scale is valid and reliable.

Data Collection and Ethical Aspects of the Study

Questionnaires prepared through Google Forms were sent to professional football clubs in seven different regions of Türkiye, and data were collected online. Data collection was completed between September and October 2024.

In order to conduct the research, permission was first obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Aksaray University (Date: 17.09.2024; Number: E-34183927-020-00000988153). The permission to use the scales and the participants' approvals were obtained, and the research was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Data Analysis

Research data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software programs. Descriptive statistics such as number, percentage, and frequency were used. The fit of the scales with the data was tested with CFA. The fit indices and reference intervals used in the analyses were determined as follows: $\chi^2/sd (\leq 5)$; RMSEA ($\leq .08$); CFI ($\geq .90$); GFI ($\geq .85$); AGFI ($\geq .85$). Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were examined for the reliability of the scales, and the Average Variance Explained (AVE) value was examined for convergent and discriminant validity. It is stated that a CR value of $> .60$ and an AVE value of $> .50$ can be accepted for convergent validity. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is expected to be $> .60$, while the factor loading is required to be at least .32 (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Fang et al., 2024). The analysis of the data was decided according to the normality assumption. Huck (2012) states that the conformity of the data to the normal distribution is possible with a range of ± 1 . In addition, in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests, the p-

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value was required to be greater than .05. However, in the analyses, it was determined that the data were not in the range of -1, +1, and the normality tests were not significant ($p < .05$; Table 4). Accordingly, non-parametric tests were used to analyze the research data. The significance level was determined as .01 and .05.

Results

Table No. 1. Demographic Distribution of Participants

Variable	Category	n	%	$\bar{x} \pm Sd$ (Min-Max)
Age				15.58 $\pm$ 1.5 (11-19)
Gender	Male	925	99.1	
	Female	8	0.9	
Region	Marmara	147	15.8	
	Aegean	142	15.2	
	Mediterranean	130	13.9	
	Central Anatolia	132	14.1	
	Black Sea	150	16.1	
	Eastern Anatolia	143	15.3	
	Southeast Anatolia	89	9.5	
League Level	Super League	218	23.4	
	1st Division	357	38.3	
	2nd Division	164	17.6	
	3rd Division	194	20.8	
Education	Middle School	97	10.4	
	High School	789	84.6	
	University	47	5.0	
Academic Perception Level	Low	53	5.7	
	Medium	626	67.1	
	High	254	27.2	
Family Income Status	Income Less than Expenses	66	7.1	
	Income Equals to Expenses	613	65.7	
	Income Exceeds Expenses	254	27.2	
Years Playing Football	1 Year and Less	45	4.8	
	Between 2-4 Years	334	35.8	
	Between 5-7 Years	392	42.0	
	8 Years and Over	162	17.4	
Did your father play football in the past?	Yes	225	24.1	
	No	708	75.9	
Father's Education Status	Primary School	156	16.7	
	Middle School	187	20.0	
	High School	356	38.2	
	University	234	25.1	
Mother's Education Status	Primary School	236	25.3	
	Middle School	206	22.1	
	High School	308	33.0	
	University	183	19.6	
Total		933	100.0	

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Frequency and percentage distributions regarding the demographic information of the participants are presented in Table 1. It was determined that 99.1% of the participants, whose average age was 15.58 (± 1.5), were male. 16.1% of the participants played football in the Black Sea Region, and 38.3% of the participants played in the academies of 1st League clubs. It was determined that 84.6% of the participants continued their high school education, 67.1% of them had a medium level of academic perception, 65.7% of them had a family income equal to their expenses, and 42.0% of them played football between 5-7. Finally, the participants were asked questions about their parents. The participants were asked whether their fathers had played licensed football in the past. 75.9% of the participants' fathers had not played football in the past. Considering the educational status of the parents, it was determined that 38.2% of the father's educational status was high school, and 33.0% of the mother's educational status was high school.

Table No. 2. Scale Mean Scores Distributions (n = 933)

Scale	Score Distributions						Normality Assumption			
							Kolmogorov-Smirnov		Shapiro-Wilk	
	Ort	Ss	Min	Max	Skew	Kurt	Statistics	p	Statistics	p
CTASA	3.20	.59	1.76	4.95	.129	-.402	.038	.003	.995	.003
DP	2.96	.79	1.00	5.00	.007	-.416	.051	.000	.994	.001
FECT	2.86	.84	1.00	5.00	.086	-.496	.055	.000	.991	.000
CCD	4.44	.50	1.00	5.00	-1.250	2.994	.038	.003	.995	.003
CHS	6.57	.86	1.25	8.00	-.898	2.518	.062	.000	.955	.000
AWT	6.65	.95	1.00	8.00	-.816	1.845	.092	.000	.945	.000
IT	6.49	.95	1.50	8.00	-.753	1.385	.083	.000	.956	.000

CTASA: Career Termination Anxiety Scale in Athletes, DP: Depersonalization; FECT: Fear of Early Career Termination; CCD: Career Completion Desire; CHS: Continuous Hope Scale, AWT: Alternative Ways Thought, IT: Initiative Thinking

Table 2 shows the score distributions obtained from the scales and the values examined for the normality assumption. Participants obtained a mean score of 3.20 ($\pm .59$) on CTASA and 6.57($\pm .86$) on CHS. While the skewness and kurtosis values of the scale and sub-dimensions were found to be between -2; and +3, it was understood that the data did not show a normal distribution ($p < .05$).

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Table No. 3. Differences between CTASA according to Independent Variables

	CTASA Total			Depersonalization			Fear of Early Career Termination			Career Completion Desire			
	Rank Mean	df	Z/X ² p	Rank Mean	df	Z/X ² p	Rank Mean	df	Z/X ² p	Rank Mean	df	Z/X ² p	
Gender													
Male	467.04		Z = -.054	467.68		Z = -.828	466.41		Z = -.717	467.29		Z = -.360	
Female	461.88		p = .957	388.50		p = .407	534.94		p = .474	433.44		p = .719	
Region													
Marmara	428.14	6	$X^2 = 34.876$ $p < .000^*$	439.01	6	$X^2 = 34.216$ $p < .000^*$	430.44	6	$X^2 = 29.709$ $p < .000^*$	452.81	6	$X^2 = 4.269$ $p = .640$	
Aegean	452.17	6		475.31	6		427.32	6		496.81	6		
Mediterranean	488.67	6		474.42	6		491.27	6		479.76	6		
Central Anatolia	374.46	6		365.09	6		398.45	6		476.13	6		
Black Sea	496.81	6		494.08	6		492.38	6		460.29	6		
Eastern Anatolia	495.88	6		487.15	6		500.22	6		459.60	6		
Southeast Anatolia	563.79	6		562.29	6		560.76	6		433.89	6		
League Level													
Super League	429.97	3	$X^2 = 14.752$ $p = .002^*$	437.55	3	$X^2 = 10.381$ $p = .016^*$	424.08	3	$X^2 = 15.193$ $p = .002^*$	491.90	3	$X^2 = 3.438$ $p = .329$	
1 st Division	448.12	3		449.52	3		455.47	3		454.83	3		
2 st Division	498.16	3		506.92	3		482.72	3		451.08	3		
3 st Division	517.01	3		498.51	3		523.16	3		474.88	3		
Education													
Middle School	436.52	2	$X^2 = 5.241$ $p = .073$	434.77	2	$X^2 = 5.198$ $p = .074$	432.14	2	$X^2 = 3.097$ $p = .213$	499.40	2	$X^2 = 2.975$ $p = .226$	
High School	475.00	2		475.08	2		473.62	2		465.85	2		
University	395.59	2		397.90	2		427.82	2		419.46	2		
Academic Perception Level													
Low	582.64	2	$X^2 = 11.612$ $p = .003^*$	594.83	2	$X^2 = 17.680$ $P < .000^*$	538.74	2	$X^2 = 3.994$ $p = .136$	504.35	2	$X^2 = 2.340$ $p = .310$	
Medium	466.52	2		472.24	2		463.10	2		458.45	2		
High	444.05	2		427.42	2		461.64	2		480.28	2		
Family Income Status													
Income Less than Expenses	564.47	2	$X^2 = 10.757$ $p = .005^*$	548.30	2	$X^2 = 10.678$ $p = .005^*$	556.84	2	$X^2 = 8.180$ $p = .017^*$	485.36	2	$X^2 = 1.160$ $p = .560$	
Income Equals to Expenses	466.69	2		472.87	2		463.24	2		460.36	2		
Income Exceeds than Expenses	442.41	2		431.71	2		452.73	2		478.27	2		
Years Playing Football													
1 Year and Less	546.46	3		466.00	3		572.81	3		518.42	3		

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Between 2-4 Years	500.68	3	$X^2 = 14.849$	496.01	3	$X^2 = 6.271$	494.79	3	$X^2 = 15.499$	467.49	3	$X^2 = 2.884$
Between 5-7 Years	443.92	3		451.55	3		443.74	3		469.89	3	
8 Years and Over	431.35	3	$p = .002^*$	444.83	3	$p = .099$	436.60	3	$p = .001^*$	444.72	3	$p = .410$
Did Your Father Play Football in the Past												
Yes	461.33		$Z = -.362$	465.81		$Z = -.076$	450.00		$Z = -1.087$	483.24		$Z = -1.055$
No	468.80		$p = .717$	467.38		$p = .939$	472.40		$p = .277$	461.84		$p = .292$
Father's Education Status												
Primary School	510.54	3		499.70	3		506.02	3		472.64	3	
Middle School	462.38	3	$X^2 = 5.214$	479.92	3	$X^2 = 5.264$	462.24	3	$X^2 = 4.210$	438.91	3	$X^2 = 5.389$
High School	461.58	3	$p = .157$	464.14	3	$p = .153$	453.74	3	$p = .240$	489.11	3	$p = .145$
University	449.91	3		439.23	3		464.97	3		452.06	3	
Mother's Education Status												
Primary School	499.01	3		497.77	3		501.76	3		450.40	3	
Middle School	480.39	3	$X^2 = 7.433$	468.03	3	$X^2 = 5.156$	486.98	3	$X^2 = 9.574$	467.90	3	$X^2 = 1.354$
High School	453.30	3	$p = .059$	458.39	3	$p = .161$	446.53	3	$p = .023^*$	473.24	3	$p = .716$
University	433.71	3		440.65	3		434.13	3		476.90	3	

CTASA Total: Career Termination Anxiety Scale in Athletes; Z: Mann-Whitney U test; X^2 : Kruskal-Wallis test

Table No. 4. Differences between CHS according to Independent Variables

	CHS Total			Alternative Ways Thought			Initiative Thinking		
	Rank Mean	df	Z/ X^2 p	Rank Mean	df	Z/ X^2 p	Rank Mean	df	Z/ X^2 p
Gender									
Male	467.86		$Z = -1.052$	468.23		$Z = -1.499$	467.60		$Z = -.733$
Female	367.31		$p = .293$	325.31		$p = .134$	397.69		$p = .464$
Region									
Marmara	462.91	6		465.31	6		463.88	6	
Aegean	512.28	6		530.12	6		481.96	6	
Mediterranean	460.66	6	$X^2 = 6.298$	485.18	6	$X^2 = 13.394$	435.20	6	$X^2 = 4.131$
Central Anatolia	471.30	6	$p = .391$	460.93	6	$p = .037^*$	485.25	6	$p = .659$
Black Sea	436.18	6		422.70	6		456.95	6	
Eastern Anatolia	458.07	6		451.83	6		460.68	6	
Southeast Anatolia	470.66	6		450.58	6		494.75	6	
League Level									
Super League	500.61	3	$X^2 = 4.592$	502.25	3	$X^2 = 5.648$	492.30	3	$X^2 = 3.869$
1 st Division	459.47	3		450.89	3		470.51	3	

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2 st Division	458.58	3	p = .204	472.05	3	p = .130	443.21	3	p = .276
3 st Division	450.22	3		452.77	3		452.23	3	
Education									
Middle School	565.56	2	$X^2 = 19.337$	562.54	2	$X^2 = 17.579$	554.43	2	$X^2 = 14.617$
High School	450.57	2		451.46	2		452.83	2	
University	539.34	2	$p < .000^*$	530.71	2	$p < .000^*$	524.38	2	$p = .001^*$
Academic Perception Level									
Low	397.13	2	$X^2 = 17.995$	408.20	2	$X^2 = 20.034$	404.65	2	$X^2 = 10.487$
Medium	449.42	2		446.54	2		455.00	2	
High	524.91	2	$p < .000^*$	529.69	2	$p < .000^*$	509.58	2	$p = .005^*$
Family Income Status									
Income Less than Expenses	429.05	2	$X^2 = 6.971$	428.66	2	$X^2 = 10.135$	437.44	2	$X^2 = 2.557$
Income Equals to Expenses	456.01	2		452.62	2		461.60	2	
Income Exceeds than Expenses	503.38	2	$p = .031^*$	511.66	2	$p = .006^*$	487.71	2	$p = .278$
Years Playing Football									
1 Year and Less	446.27	3		459.86	3		446.06	3	
Between 2-4 Years	482.54	3	$X^2 = 2.893$	474.38	3	$X^2 = 1.156$	486.45	3	$X^2 = 4.291$
Between 5-7 Years	466.90	3		469.50	3		465.95	3	
8 Years and Over	440.98	3	$p = .408$	447.70	3	$p = .764$	435.27	3	$p = .232$
Did Your Father Play Football in the Past									
Yes	470.86		$Z = -.247$	477.67		$Z = -.684$	467.90		$Z = -.058$
No	465.77		$p = .805$	463.61		$p = .494$	466.71		$p = .954$
Father's Education Status									
Primary School	469.86	3		454.75	3		481.05	3	
Middle School	439.69	3	$X^2 = 2.620$	435.13	3	$X^2 = 4.528$	444.04	3	$X^2 = 1.979$
High School	478.60	3		483.32	3		473.13	3	
University	469.28	3	$p = .454$	475.81	3	$p = .210$	466.66	3	$p = .577$
Mother's Education Status									
Primary School	455.17	3		447.22	3		460.63	3	
Middle School	463.25	3	$X^2 = 1.161$	452.99	3	$X^2 = 3.757$	472.74	3	$X^2 = .593$
High School	469.06	3		477.26	3		462.03	3	
University	483.01	3	$p = .762$	491.01	3	$p = .289$	477.13	3	$p = .898$

CHS Total: Continuous Hope Scale; Z: Mann-Whitney U test; X^2 : Kruskal-Wallis test

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Differences between CTASA and CHS sub-dimensions were examined depending on the independent variables of the participants (Table 3 and Table 4). According to the findings, there was no difference between both career termination anxiety and hope level of academy football players according to their gender, whether their fathers played licensed football in the past or not, and parental education level ($p > .05$). In addition, it was understood that there was no difference in CTASA total score and sub-dimensions according to the educational status of the academy football players and in CHS total score and sub-dimensions according to the league level and years of playing football ($p > .05$).

There was a significant difference between the CTASA total score ($p < .000$), depersonalization ($p < .000$), and fear of early career termination ($p < .000$) sub-dimensions according to the regions where academy football players played. There was no difference between the career completion desires ($p = .021$) sub-dimension by region. It was observed that academy football players in the Southeastern Region experienced higher career completion anxiety than those in the Marmara, Aegean, and Central Anatolia Regions. In the depersonalization sub-dimension, it was found that academy players in Central Anatolia experienced less depersonalization than the others. It was determined that academy football players in the Eastern and Southeastern Regions experienced higher Fear of Early Career Termination than those in the Marmara, Aegean, and Central Anatolia Regions. There was no difference between CHS total score and initiative thinking according to regions ($p > .05$). However, a significant difference was found in the alternative ways thought sub-dimension ($p = .037$), and it was determined that the middle scores of academy football players in the Aegean Region were higher than those in the Black Sea and Eastern Anatolia.

While there was a significant difference between CTASA total score ($p = .002$), depersonalization ($p = .016$), and fear of early career termination ($p = .002$) sub-dimensions according to league level, no difference was found in terms of Career Completion Desire ($p > .05$). Prospective football players who play in the academies of 3rd League clubs experience higher career termination anxiety than those who play in the academies of Super League and 1st League clubs. The 2nd League academies had higher mean scores than the academies of Super League clubs. Finally, it was understood that those who play in the academies of 3rd League clubs experience fear of early career

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termination more than those who play in the academies of Super League and 1st League clubs.

It was observed that there were differences between CHS total score ($p < .000$), alternative ways thought ($p < .000$), and initiative thinking ($p = .001$) sub-dimensions according to educational status. It was understood that the mean scores of individuals with secondary school education were higher than those with high school education.

A questionnaire was administered to prospective football players to ascertain their perceptions of the academic standards of their school education. A significant difference was identified between the CTASA total score and depersonalization ($p = .003$), while no difference was observed between fear of early career termination and career completion desire ($p > .05$). It was observed that prospective football players with a "low" academic perception level exhibited elevated levels of career termination anxiety and depersonalization relative to their counterparts. A significant difference was observed between the CHS total score ($p < .000$), alternative ways thought ($p < .000$), and initiative thought ($p = .005$) sub-dimensions according to academic perception level. It was evident that players who perceived their academic abilities to be high exhibited a greater level of hope than those who perceived their academic abilities to be low or medium.

While there was a difference between CTASA total score ($p = .005$), depersonalization ($p = .005$), and fear of early career termination ($p = .017$) according to family income status of academy players, there was no difference between career completion desire ($p > .05$). It is understood that academy football players whose family income is less than their expenses experience higher career completion anxiety. Moreover, it was found that the level of hope ($p = .031$) and alternative ways of thought ($p = .006$) were higher in prospective football players whose family income was higher than their expenses. It was determined that there was no difference in terms of initiative thinking ($p > .05$).

It was observed that there was a difference in CTASA total score ($p = .002$) and fear of early career termination ($p = .001$) according to the duration of playing football. On the other hand, there was no difference between depersonalization and career completion desire sub-dimensions ($p > .05$). It was determined that those who had played

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for 1 year or less and those who had played for 2-4 years experienced higher career termination anxiety than those who had played for 5 years or more.

Table No. 5. Correlation Results

	Age	CTASA	Depersonalization	Fear of Early Career Termination	Career Completion Desire
Age	-	.012	.014	.049	-.124**
CHS	-.114**	.015	.030	-.091**	.296**
Alternative Ways Thought	-.088**	.012	.005	-.057	.247**
Initiative Thinking	-.126**	.007	.051	-.107**	.291**

p<0.01** CTASA: Career Termination Anxiety Scale in Athletes CHS: Continuous Hope Scale

Table 5 presents the correlation results between age, CTASA, and CHS. Negative correlations were found between age and career completion desires ($r = -.12$; $p < .01$), CHS total score ($r = -.11$; $p < .01$), alternative ways thought ($r = -.09$; $p < .01$) and initiative thinking ($r = -.13$; $p < .01$).

When the relationships between the scale and its sub-dimensions were examined, no relationship was found between CTASA total score and depersonalization sub-dimensions and CHS total score and sub-dimensions ($p > .01$). However, negative relationships were found between the CTASA fear of early career termination sub-dimension and CHS total score ($r = -.09$; $p < .01$) and initiative thinking ($r = -.11$; $p < .01$) sub-dimension. Finally, there were significant positive correlations between *Career Completion Desire* and CHS total score ($r = .30$; $p < .01$), alternative ways thought ($r = .25$; $p < .01$) and initiative thought ($r = .29$; $p < .01$) sub-dimensions.

Discussion

In the literature, there is no research examining the relationship between career termination anxiety and hope level. Accordingly, the current study aims to examine the relationship between career termination anxiety and the hope level of children and young people who dream of becoming football players and to provide recommendations to the relevant stakeholders according to the research results. The findings of the study showed that prospective football players who play in the academies of professional football clubs in Türkiye have a moderate level of career termination anxiety and a high level of hope. Becoming a popular football player is the dream of every child and young person who plays football. The fact that this sample group played in the academies of professional

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clubs may have led to moderate levels of career termination anxiety and high levels of hope. In similar studies to those conducted in amateur clubs or different lands, career termination anxieties and hope levels of children and youth playing football can be examined and compared. No difference was found between career termination anxiety and hope levels of academy football players according to their gender. This result may be due to the small size of the female population. In future studies, it is thought that more children and young people of the female gender who play football can be included in the studies, and comparisons can be made between genders.

Football may be the only sport played everywhere in the world. The dream and hope of every child and young person in every piece of land, whether urban or rural, is to become a famous football player. Türkiye consists of seven geographical regions, each region having its own characteristics and a socio-demographic structure that varies. The findings of the study showed that there are differences between regions in terms of career termination anxiety. Children who dream of becoming a football player in the east of the country have higher career termination anxiety than those who play in the west or other regions. Rábai (2022) examined the future visions of academy football players in the capital and provinces of Hungary. The findings showed that prospective football players playing in academies in the capital had a more positive vision of their future than those in the provinces. Hernández-Simal et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive study examining the impact of place of birth and place of development on the careers of prospective football players playing in football academies. The findings showed the importance of geography in sporting success. A statistically significant correlation was found between a child's birthplace and his/her later success when the transition to the place where he/she developed athletically was compared. Almeida and Volossovitch (2022) found that the date of birth of players selected for a tournament in Portugal was influenced by geographical location. It was stated that geographical structure may limit the availability of talented players even within the country (Jiménez & Pain 2008). As a result, it can be argued that geographical structure has significant effects on the discovery, development, visions, anxieties, and hopes of academy football players.

Turkish football has four different professional leagues, with 139 clubs competing in the 2024-2025 season. Clubs have established football academies that they

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aim to shoulder the sporting and economic burden in the future. Players in these academies tend to go through various categories, develop, and move up to the first team. The hypothesis about whether the league level affects the career termination anxiety and hopes of the players in the academies was tested. As expected, there was a difference between the career termination anxiety of the players in the academies of Super League clubs, which is the highest level of Turkish leagues, and 3rd League clubs, which is the lowest category of professional leagues. It is seen that 3rd League clubs' academies' prospective football players experience career termination anxiety more. Although it is difficult to discuss the findings with the results of another study due to the limitations of the literature, it is thought to be easy to interpret within the scope of the current study. In order to play in the academies of elite clubs or the academies of the clubs in the top professional leagues of the countries, one must first be talented. In other words, every player who plays there is a player who has found a place for himself by proving his talent. The working environment, mental support, training methods, and much more are offered to these talented players, and they are different from the opportunities offered to academies in the lower leagues. The attention given to these players may have given them self-confidence and strengthened their dreams of becoming a professional footballer. In addition, when they reach the professional level, the reference of the clubs they played for in their academies creates another hope for them. Therefore, it was expected that academy players in the top leagues experienced less career termination anxiety. It can be said that the players who play in the academies in the lower leagues experience the fear of not becoming professional football players, which is reflected in their careers and causes anxiety. In the literature, it is stated that high fear of failure has particularly negative psychological effects. Worry and anxiety have been reported to be the leading negative psychological factors (Sagar et al., 2010). In order to understand the quantitative findings in more depth, it is recommended to conduct qualitative, quantitative or mixed-method studies on players in the academies of lower league clubs in different countries.

The present study examined the influence of educational status and academic perception levels on career termination anxiety and desire among pre-service football players. While the quantitative findings do not provide definitive conclusions, the results do align with some expectations. Specifically, no statistically significant correlation was

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identified between career termination anxiety and education level. However, the findings indicate that there is a discrepancy in terms of their desire. Players at the secondary school level exhibit higher levels of hope than those at the high school level. Athletes commence their compulsory school education prior to embarking on their careers, subsequently pursuing higher education if they so desire (Karadağ & Aşçı, 2021). In recent years, there has been a notable increase in interest in this situation, which is characterized as a dual career in athletes (Vidal-Vilaplana et al., 2022). It has been posited that a significant turning point in an athlete's sporting career coincides with pivotal stages of their educational journey (Alp, 2020). It can, therefore, be posited that the discrepancy in the desire of academy players at the middle and high school levels may be attributed to this phenomenon. It would be beneficial for future studies to provide support for athletes who are faced with the difficult decision of choosing between a football career and a school career during critical periods of their education. As anticipated, players who rated their academic performance highly during their educational careers exhibited low levels of career termination anxiety and high levels of hope. In other words, it can be posited that prospective football players who successfully complete their academic careers do not experience anxiety about their future careers in football and instead pursue alternative paths. Indeed, in numerous cultural contexts, there is a view that education and sport should be regarded as complementary concepts. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that athletes encounter challenges in reconciling these two aspects (Pavlidis & Gargalianos, 2014). Thus, it is recommended that football academies should provide mentors to assist players with low academy perception levels in developing career awareness and in managing and planning their careers.

Before career termination anxiety was tested according to years of playing football, it was clearly thought that career termination anxiety would increase as years of playing football increased. Factors such as increased competition, worry about the future, increased awareness, and fatigue from life were the basis for this idea. However, unexpectedly, it was observed that those who had been playing football for a longer period of time experienced less career termination anxiety. There are studies in the literature that support these findings. Domínguez-González et al. (2024) analyzed the sport psychology of football players between the ages of 14-18. The older football players showed a

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superior psychological profile and self-confidence compared to the younger ones. Domínguez-González et al. (2024) stated that this result can be attributed to the maturation of players as they get older and their sports experience increases.

There is no doubt that talent is partly inherited (Howe et al., 1998). Based on this, it was tested whether fathers playing football in the past made a difference in terms of career termination anxiety and hope in academy players. It was believed that there might be a difference in terms of career anxiety and hope in the children of fathers who played football. Because it was the most important premise that fathers who did not play football had the experience to guide their children on their career journey. However, contrary to what was thought, the findings showed that the father's playing football in the past years did not have an effect on the career termination anxiety or hope of academy players. This hypothesis can be tested again in different studies in various sports branches. Thus, it is thought that more realistic interpretations can be made.

It was examined whether socio-economic factors related to the parents of academy players would make a difference in terms of their career termination anxiety or hopes. The income status of families is one of the socio-economic variables. Children of families whose income is higher than their expenses experience less career termination anxiety. In addition, these children were also found to have higher hopes and thoughts of seeking alternative paths. The findings were concluded as expected. However, when the literature is examined, it is seen that the results differ. For example, De Paulo (2013) examined the relationship between socioeconomic status and sport anxiety of young athletes and reported that household income did not affect cognitive and somatic anxiety and self-confidence. In another study, it was determined that there was no difference between the monthly income level of the families of athlete students and career anxiety (Çağlayan & Yılmaz, 2018). On the other hand, Sarı et al. (2023) found that the family income status of amateur football players had an effect on career anxiety. It was determined that children from low-income families experience career termination anxiety more. As mentioned above, the findings of the current study are as expected. Economically affluent families are more likely to give their children more opportunities and possibilities in their future careers than middle- or low-income families. Therefore, it was thought that academy players in families whose income was higher than their expenses would experience less

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career anxiety and more hope. However, the fact that different research results are found in the literature limits the interpretation that this factor has an effect on the careers and hopes of young athletes. Therefore, more studies are needed to investigate the current hypothesis. The other socio-economic factor examined was the parents' education level. When the effect of these factors on career termination anxiety and hope levels of academy players was tested, it can be said that none of the results were significant despite the effect of mother's educational status on Fear of Early Career Termination.

Age is characterized as the primary reason for career termination (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993). A negative relationship was found between age and Career Completion Desires and hope level. In other words, it can be said that the desire for career completion and the hopes of academy players decrease with increasing age. However, not for academy players, the relationship between age and career completion status of professional adult athletes has been examined. For example, in one study, it was possible to verify that 55% of the sample abandoned the football player career in the age group of 21 to 25 years (Borges et al., 2022). Similar results were found in studies conducted with tennis players (Allison & Meyer, 1988). The relationship between age variable and Career Completion Desires and hope psychological/mental or physiological reasons can explain the level. Namely, the competitive environment that academy players enter as they get older requires more physical effort. At the same time, athletes who continue their academic careers at school are mentally fatigued. As they get older, academy players' anxiety about not being selected or not becoming a professional may have exhausted their desire or hope to complete their career as soon as possible.

For the purpose of the study, the relationship between career termination anxiety and the hope level of academy players was examined. No relationship was found between the total scores of the scale. However, statistically significant relationships were found in sub-dimensions. As academy players' fear of early career termination increased, their level of hope and initiative thoughts decreased. On the other hand, as their career completion desire increased, their hope levels, search for alternative paths, and thoughts of initiative increased. In the study conducted by Fors and Öberg in 2022, the relationship between burnout and hope level among senior football players was examined, and it was determined that there was a negative correlation between the phenomena. Competition

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anxiety was found to lead to a negative psychological profile and a decrease in self-confidence and flow state (Domínguez-González et al., 2024). It can be said that the studies in the literature support the current research findings.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Becoming a football player is the dream of almost all children. Many of them enter the academies of football clubs and start their career journey. However, very few make it to the professional level. There are many reasons for this. Examples such as limited talent, unwanted injuries, and misguidance by stakeholders such as coaches/managers/family can be given. However, while academy players are still at the beginning of their career journey, it is important not to forget the behind-the-scenes factors that can affect their future. Anxiety is perhaps the most prominent of these factors. Numerous studies have been conducted on anxiety, which is one of the main topics of psychology. The fact that high anxiety causes many negative situations has also been proven. In the current study, it was thought that career termination anxiety experienced by children and young people who dream of becoming football players in football academies could affect the level of hope, and the research was carried out. Firstly, it was tested whether various independent factors made a difference in the cases. It was found that factors such as the region where children play football, league level, educational status, perception of success at school, years of playing football, and age were found to be important factors affecting the level of career termination anxiety and hope. Secondly, in line with the main purpose of the study, the relationship between career termination anxiety and hope was examined. It was understood that academy players who experience career termination anxiety are more prone to lose hope. The current research was conducted with academy players who hope to become football players in Türkiye. Similar research to be conducted in different countries can determine the effects of career termination anxiety in children who hope to become football players. In fact, it is thought that the factors that may cause career termination anxiety in football academy players should be explored. As mentioned above, very few children achieve their dreams. By identifying the factors that cause career termination anxiety, stakeholders can find solutions more easily. Thus, the percentage of people who become professional football players can be increased. Children can be directed to continue their education or to different branches at an early age.

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Limitations of the Study

The current study was conducted with football players in the academies of professional clubs in Türkiye. This is the most important limitation of the study. In the amateur leagues there are millions of young people hoping to become footballers. Therefore, football players playing in amateur clubs can also be included in future studies. One of the limitations of the study is that the gender sample is not homogeneous. Women's football has developed in Türkiye. Therefore, the research can be repeated in different countries with sample groups in which male and female groups are homogeneously distributed.

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