



## Serious Leisure Perspectives in Sports: Professional Athletes' Career Progress via Serious Leisure

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine serious leisure perspectives of professional athletes. 689 athletes selected through random sampling participated in the study. The data were collected with the "Serious Leisure Inventory and Measure (Short Form) (SLIM)", developed by Gould et al. (2011) adapted to Turkish by Ozdemir, Ayyıldız Durhan, and Akgül (2020) which consisting of 12 items and 3 sub-dimensions. It was determined that the data were not distributed homogeneously and non parametric tests were applied. In the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics, Man Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis, Tukey (HSD-LSD) and Pearson Correlation test were used for within-group comparisons. In this study, total internal reliability coefficient of SLIM (short form) scale was determined as .93. Participants had higher SLIM scores ( $89,60 \pm 15,76$ ), the highest subscale score was "identification with pursuit and social outcomes" sub-dimension ( $37,39 \pm 7,35$ ), and the lowest subscale score was "individual outcomes" ( $22,30 \pm 4,39$ ). Significant relationships and differences were found among the variables of gender, sports, age of athletics, number of trainings per week, participation status of international competitions, perceived challenge of duties, perceived skill development and perceived total development. As a result of the research, it was determined that professional athletes had high serious leisure perspectives and this situation being in interaction with certain variables.

**Keywords:** Serious leisure, Professional athletes, Career progress, Volleyball, Judo, Taekwondo.

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### Contribution of this paper to the literature

This study contributes in the existing literature as a special example of 'career achieved through serious leisure pursuits' in terms of individuals starting their potential sports life at a young age primarily as a hobby, continuing as an amateur pursuit and reaching a professional career.

## 1. Introduction

The serious leisure perspective (SLP) is a typology of leisure activity developed and promulgated by Robert Stebbins as an ongoing project since 1974 (Stebbins, 2007; Veal, 2017). In the SLP, leisure is defined as uncoerced activity engaged in during free time, which people want to do and, in either a satisfying or a fulfilling way (or both), use their abilities and resources to succeed at this (Stebbins, 2007). The SLP is the theoretic framework that synthesizes three main forms of leisure, known as *serious leisure (serious pursuits)*, *casual leisure*, and *project-based leisure*. Many of the roots of the SLP date to late 1973, even though the concept itself was only formally introduced and elaborated much later in Stebbins (Stebbins, 2015). Stebbins (2007) defined the distinctive features, similarities, and interrelationships of three forms of leisure. In his view, *casual leisure* is immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity, requiring little or no special training to enjoy it. *Project-based leisure* is short-term, reasonably complicated, one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time, or time free of disagreeable obligation. *Serious leisure* is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in a typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centered on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience. Serious leisure activities require significant personal effort and even an occasional need to persevere. Serious leisure activities have durable, lasting benefits. Participants identify strongly with the activity and can even find a career in it, meaning that they experience different stages of achievement/involvement in the activity during their lifetime (Stebbins, 1996; Stebbins, 2009).

Six distinguishing qualities differentiate serious leisure from less substantial, short-term leisure pursuits (Stebbins, 2007; Stebbins, 1992; Stebbins, 2014). Identified six characteristics of serious leisure including: (1) persevere, (2) leisure career, (3) significant personal effort, (4) durable benefits, (5) unique ethos, and (6) strong identification with an activity (Stebbins, 1982). Participants embark upon a career in their activity and may need to occasionally *persevere* to enable ongoing participation. Significant *personal effort* is invested in the activity, developing knowledge, skills, and experience. Stebbins also maintains that ongoing participation in serious leisure is driven by the realization of *durable benefits* including self-actualization, self-enrichment, and/or self-gratification. Finally, participants engage with the *unique ethos* and social world of their activity and strongly *identify* with the activity in their projection of self to the world (Lamont, Kennelly, & Moyle, 2014; Lamont, Kennelly, & Moyle, 2019; Stebbins, 2014).

Stebbins (2001) regarded that serious leisure is the best way for people spending their free time in postmodern society. Within this type of leisure, people feel deep satisfaction and experience a full existence. In serious leisure, individuals' feels substantial and interesting in their leisure pursuits, acquire special skills, knowledge and experience through their leisure dedication and have a career development.

Career development in serious leisure is considered to be long-term development with special turning points or stages of involvement and personal commitment (Kraus, 2014; Raisborough, 2007; Stebbins, 1992). A career is 'the typical course, or passage, of certain types of amateur-professional practitioners that carries them into, and through, a leisure role ...' (Stebbins, 1992). Persons engaged in serious leisure, develop careers centered on their chosen activity (Stebbins, 2007) Serious leisure careers involve an individual's "steady development as a skilled, experienced, and knowledgeable participant" in a particular activity (Stebbins, 2007). Careers typically include five stages: beginning, development, establishment, maintenance and decline of special skills and knowledge (Stebbins, 2012). For an instance, in the case of adult amateur ice skaters, McQuarrie and Jackson (1996) identified five progressive leisure career stages: (1) becoming a potential participant; (2) beginning in the sport; (3) development; (4) establishment; and (5) decline or exit from the sport. The various characteristics associated with each of these leisure career stages are discussed in greater detail by Stebbins (2007). The beginning stage lasts as long as it is necessary for the activity to take root. Development occurs when the activity becomes more or less routine and systematic. A change to the establishment stage occurs when the participant has moved beyond learning the basics of the activity. During the maintenance stage, the leisure career is in "full bloom" and participants enjoy their pursuit to its utmost. In the final stage, not all participants reach the decline or exit stage, but in the case of those who do so, it may be due to deteriorating mental or physical skills. Some may then search for a new activity (Stebbins, 2007). Besides, Gould, Moore, McGuire, and Stebbins (2008) subdivided the career quality of serious leisure into two dimensions: career progress and career contingencies. Career progress focuses on the conscious improvement of leisure participation during the individuals' engagement. Career contingencies emphasize the turning points or special events of that leisure involvement.

Pursuing a career in sports as an athlete in a semi-professional or professional category, begins as a hobbyist or an amateur interest under the umbrella of serious leisure perspective. Achieving a career in sports through serious leisure; supported by school and collegiate sports as much as amateur sport clubs. However, weekend sports classes for early ages also play an important role to get a good start. Sport is also often a form of serious leisure (Stebbins.... 1992) that provides participants "small worlds" of social identification, opportunities for learning and developing skills, escape from monotonous and routine work, recognition for commitment and excellence, and a context for the expression of achievement motivations. Within the framework of serious leisure, a wide and diverse range of studies have been conducted over the past three decades with sports being one of the most popular activities in the domain of serious leisure, including master swimmers (Hastings, Kurth, Schloder, & Cyr, 1995) youth sports (Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997) whitewater kayakers (Sherry & Bartram, 2001) dancers (Brown, 2007) cycling (O'Connor & Brown, 2010) playing chess (Gould et al., 2011) taekwondo participation (Kim, Dattilo, & Heo, 2011) amateur athletes (MacCosham, Patry, Beswick, & Gravelle, 2015) competition climbing (Gagnon, Stone, & Garst, 2015) runners (Ronkainen, Harrison, Shuman, & Ryba, 2017) female roller derby athletes (Liu, Baghurst, & Bradley, 2018) and different sets of athletes (Romero, Iraurgi, Madariaga, & Gould, 2020). These

studies demonstrated a strong relationship between the serious leisure characteristics of athletes and their leisure involvement and dedication. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to examine the serious leisure perspectives of athletes in Turkey. Second it's aimed to understand relationship between serious leisure characteristics and career progress, and other variables.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Study Sample

The sample of the study consists of 689 semi-professional and professional athletes whose playing volleyball, doing judo and taekwondo from several sports clubs in Turkey. The data were collected between March and June 2019 at the province of Ankara, İstanbul, Bursa and İzmir during the intercollegiate judo and taekwondo competitions, volleyball super leagues' play-off and play-out competitions in Turkey. In the collected data, 34 surveys were not evaluated in the research because of the missing. Aims of the study, the consent form, voluntary participation in the study, and confidentiality of the survey responses were verbally explained by investigators before the distribution of the surveys to subjects. The survey were answered and completed within an average of 15 minutes. Demographic information about the research group is given in Table 1.

### 2.2. Instrumentation

The data were collected with the "Serious Leisure Inventory and Measure (Short Form)" (SLIM), developed by Gould et al. (2011). SLIM adapted to Turkish testing of validity and reliability by Ozdemir et al. (2020) which consisting of 12 items and 3 sub-dimensions. The short form of Turkish version-SLIM includes three sub-dimensions as; "identification with pursuit and social outcomes", "perseverance and leisure career" and "individual outcomes." In addition, there are 8 more questions regarding the demographic variables and sports background of the athletes.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

It was determined that the data were not distributed homogeneously and non-parametric tests were applied. In the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics, Man Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis, Tukey (HSD-LSD) and Pearson Correlation tests were used for within-group comparisons. In this study, the total internal reliability coefficient of the SLIM (short form) scale was determined as .93. Data were analyzed by using SPSS 23.0 version.

## 3. Results

Table-1. Frequency and percentage range of demographic variables.

n=(689)			
	Variable	f	%
Gender	Female	449	65,2
	Male	240	34,8
Sports	Judo	160	23,2
	Taekwondo	342	49,6
	Volleyball	187	27,1
Age of Athletics	2 or 3 years or less	32	4,6
	4 or 5 years	44	6,4
	6 or 7 years	67	9,7
	8 or 9 years	66	9,6
	10 or 11 years	92	13,4
	12 or 13 years	123	17,9
	14 or 15 years	89	12,9
	16 or 17 years	52	7,5
	18 or 19 years	82	11,9
Training per week	20 years and above	42	6,1
	2 times per week or less	105	15,2
	3 times	138	20,0
	4 times	71	10,3
	5 times	98	14,2
	6 times	113	16,4
Participation of International Competitions	7 times and above	164	23,8
	Participated	401	58,2
Perceived challenge of the duties (self scoring range of 1 to 10)	Non participated	288	41,8
	3 and less (point)	59	8,6
	4	66	9,6
	5	115	16,7
	6	94	13,6
	7	126	18,3
	8	118	17,1
	9	49	7,1
	10	62	9,0
Perceived skill development (self scoring range of 1 to 10)	3 and less (point)	42	6,1
	4	43	6,2
	5	97	14,1
	6	94	13,6
	7	156	22,6
	8	144	20,9

Perceived total development (self scoring range of 1 to 10)	9	52	7,5
	10	61	8,9
	Better	316	45,9
	Same	256	37,2
	Worse	117	17,0

Table 1 provides information about athletes' demographic and professional profiles. Accordingly, the majority of the participants are women (65.2%) and active athletes (17.9%) for an average of 12-13 years. In addition; the participants are taekwondo (49.6%), volleyball (27.1%) and judo (23.2%) athletes respectively, who trains 7 or more times per week (23.8%), participated in international competitions (58.2%), consists of athletes who grades seven points both of perceived challenge degree (18.3%) and skill development (2.6%) out of ten, and express their perceived total development as "better" (45.9%).

**Table-2.** Mean and standard deviation values of the SLIM.

n=(689)				
	Min.	Max.	$\bar{x}$	ss
SLIM	16,00	108,00	89,60	15,76
Identification with pursuit and Social outcomes	5,00	45,00	37,39	7,35
Perseverance and Leisure career	4,00	36,00	29,89	5,64
Individual outcomes	3,00	27,00	22,30	4,39

As a result of the analyzes in Table 2, it was determined that athletes have higher SLIM scores ( $89,60 \pm 15,76$ ), the highest subscale score was "identification with pursuit and social outcomes" sub-dimension ( $37,39 \pm 7,35$ ), and the lowest subscale score was "individual outcomes" ( $22,30 \pm 4,39$ ).

**Table-3.** Man Whitney U test results between participants' gender and SLIM.

	Gender	n	Mean rank	Rank sum	z	p
SLIM	Female	449	355,70	159710,00	-1,931	0,053
	Male	240	324,98	77995,00		
Identification with pursuit and Social outcomes	Female	449	354,85	159326,50	-1,782	0,075
	Male	240	326,58	78378,50		
Perseverance and Leisure career	Female	449	353,78	158845,00	-1,589	0,112
	Male	240	328,58	78860,00		
Individual outcomes	Female	449	356,42	160034,50	-2,074	0,038*
	Male	240	323,63	77670,50		

Note: \*p<0,05.

When the Man Whitney U test results were examined between the gender variable and SLIM in Table 3, it was seen that there is a significant difference between the Individual outcomes sub-dimensions and the gender variable. In the Individual outcomes sub-dimension, it was determined that women athletes displayed higher development scores than men. There was no significant relationship between total scores and other sub-dimensions and gender.

**Table-4.** Kruskal Wallis test results between sports and SLIM.

	Sports	n	Mean rank	df	$\chi^2$	p
SLIM	Judo <sup>c</sup>	160	323,68	2	12,294	0,002*
	Taekwondo	342	331,32			
	Volleyball <sup>a</sup>	187	388,25			
	Total	689				
Identification with pursuit and Social outcomes	Judo	160	325,22	2	5,731	0,057
	Taekwondo	342	338,79			
	Volleyball	187	373,29			
	Total	689				
Perseverance and Leisure career	Judo <sup>b</sup>	160	326,32	2	17,261	0,000*
	Taekwondo <sup>c</sup>	342	325,63			
	Volleyball <sup>a</sup>	187	396,40			
	Total	689				
Individual outcomes	Judo <sup>b</sup>	160	338,07	2	7,253	0,027*
	Taekwondo <sup>c</sup>	342	330,27			
	Volleyball <sup>a</sup>	187	377,86			
	Total	689				

Note: \*p<0,05.

According to the Kruskal Wallis test results between sports variable and SLIM in Table 4, it was observed that significant differences between in sub-dimensions and total scores of SLIM. Accordingly, it has been determined that professional athletes in the volleyball branch gave higher SLIM levels compared to the participants in other branches.

**Table-5.** Kruskal Wallis test results between age of athletics and SLIM.

	Age of athletics	n	Mean rank	df	x <sup>2</sup>	p
SLIM	2 or 3 years or less <sup>c</sup>	32	254,94	9	24,163	0,004*
	4 or 5 years	44	286,19			
	6 or 7 years	67	305,21			
	8 or 9 years	66	320,94			
	10 or 11 years	92	325,65			
	12 or 13 years	123	371,57			
	14 or 15 years <sup>b</sup>	89	370,70			
	16 or 17 years <sup>a</sup>	52	393,90			
	18 or 19 years	82	369,44			
	20 years and above	42	378,37			
Total	689					
Identification with pursuit and Social outcomes	2 or 3 years or less	32	254,02	9	17,257	0,045*
	4 or 5 years	44	298,38			
	6 or 7 years	67	320,07			
	8 or 9 years	66	325,00			
	10 or 11 years	92	341,33			
	12 or 13 years <sup>c</sup>	123	361,75			
	14 or 15 years <sup>d</sup>	89	351,52			
	16 or 17 years <sup>a</sup>	52	396,10			
	18 or 19 years <sup>b</sup>	82	372,66			
	20 years and above	42	362,27			
Total	689					
Perseverance and Leisure career	2 or 3 years or less	32	262,83	9	23,299	0,006*
	4 or 5 years	44	285,38			
	6 or 7 years	67	306,81			
	8 or 9 years	66	332,36			
	10 or 11 years	92	314,28			
	12 or 13 years <sup>a</sup>	123	375,92			
	14 or 15 years <sup>c</sup>	89	372,60			
	16 or 17 years <sup>b</sup>	52	375,44			
	18 or 19 years	82	368,51			
	20 years and above	42	385,51			
Total	689					
Individual outcomes	2 or 3 years or less <sup>b</sup>	32	259,28	9	23,756	0,000*
	4 or 5 years	44	298,75			
	6 or 7 years	67	305,37			
	8 or 9 years	66	307,67			
	10 or 11 years	92	328,32			
	12 or 13 years	123	365,85			
	14 or 15 years <sup>a</sup>	89	388,70			
	16 or 17 years	52	386,64			
	18 or 19 years	82	368,14			
	20 years and above	42	366,80			
Total	689					

Note:\*p&lt;0,05.

When the Kruskal Wallis test results examined between the age of athletics and SLIM, it was seen significant differences between in sub-dimensions and total scores of SLIM. Accordingly, it has been determined that the groups with 12 and more age of athletics years have higher averages than the other groups in the significant difference observed in SLIM total scores and sub-dimension scores. Differences in the within-group were tested by Tukey HSD and LSD tests and shown in [Table 5](#).

**Table-6.** Kruskal Wallis test results between number of training per week and SLIM.

	Number of training per week	n	Mean rank	df	x <sup>2</sup>	p
SLIM	2 times or less <sup>f</sup>	105	266,21	5	54,452	0,000*
	3 times <sup>e</sup>	138	275,73			
	4 times <sup>b</sup>	71	382,98			
	5 times <sup>d</sup>	98	368,19			
	6 times <sup>c</sup>	113	369,93			
	7 times and above <sup>a</sup>	164	406,26			
	Total	689				
Identification with pursuit and Social outcomes	2 times or less <sup>c</sup>	105	296,95	5	18,968	0,002*
	3 times <sup>b</sup>	138	307,42			
	4 times	71	366,08			
	5 times	98	355,36			
	6 times	113	356,33			
	7 times and above <sup>a</sup>	164	384,25			
	Total	689				
Perseverance and Leisure career	2 times or less <sup>f</sup>	105	238,70	5	92,558	0,000*
	3 times <sup>e</sup>	138	253,86			
	4 times <sup>c</sup>	71	396,11			
	5 times <sup>d</sup>	98	386,76			

	6 times <sup>b</sup>	113	392,37			
	7 times and above <sup>a</sup>	164	410,03			
	Total	689				
Individual outcomes	2 times or less <sup>c</sup>	105	284,17	5	36,277	0,000*
	3 times <sup>b</sup>	138	288,78			
	4 times	71	367,41			
	5 times	98	359,71			
	6 times	113	363,15			
	7 times and above <sup>a</sup>	164	400,26			
	Total	689				

Note:\*p&lt;0,05.

According to Kruskal Wallis test results between weekly training number and measurement tools in Table 6, it was determined that there were significant relationships between SLIM and variables. Accordingly, while the number of weekly trainings increases, SLIM level increases.

Table-7. Man Whitney U test results between participation of international competitions and SLIM.

	Participation of International Competitions	n	Mean rank	Rank sum	z	p
SLIM	Participant	401	376,89	151133,00	-4,965	0,000*
	Nonparticipant	288	300,60	86572,00		
Identification with pursuit and Social outcomes	Participant	401	359,73	144253,50	-2,300	0,021*
	Nonparticipant	288	324,48	93451,50		
Perseverance and Leisure career	Participant	401	390,65	156652,50	-7,134	0,000*
	Nonparticipant	288	281,43	81052,50		
Individual outcomes	Participant	401	375,66	150638,00	-4,800	0,000*
	Nonparticipant	288	302,32	87067,00		

Note:\*p&lt;0,05.

Table-8. Kruskal Wallis test results between challenge of the duties and SLIM.

	Perceived challenge of the duties (point)	n	Mean rank	df	x <sup>2</sup>	p
SLIM (self scoring range of 1 to 10)	3 or less	59	377,21	7	22,334	0,002*
	4 <sup>c</sup>	66	343,76			
	5 <sup>e</sup>	115	329,76			
	6 <sup>d</sup>	94	337,69			
	7 <sup>f</sup>	126	322,69			
	8 <sup>g</sup>	118	309,35			
	9 <sup>a</sup>	49	438,21			
	10 <sup>b</sup>	62	394,56			
	Total	689				
Identification with pursuit and Social outcomes	3 or less <sup>b</sup>	59	381,01	7	16,933	0,018*
	4 <sup>h</sup>	66	316,73			
	5 <sup>f</sup>	115	330,94			
	6 <sup>g</sup>	94	330,64			
	7 <sup>e</sup>	126	341,50			
	8 <sup>d</sup>	118	321,88			
	9 <sup>a</sup>	49	434,82			
	10 <sup>c</sup>	62	368,81			
	Total	689				
Perseverance and Leisure career	3 or less <sup>b</sup>	59	398,42	7	31,411	0,000*
	4 <sup>c</sup>	66	339,11			
	5	115	341,40			
	6	94	348,13			
	7 <sup>e</sup>	126	293,00			
	8 <sup>d</sup>	118	310,28			
	9 <sup>a</sup>	49	414,87			
	10	62	418,92			
	Total	689				
Individual outcomes	3 or less	59	352,90	7	23,555	0,001*
	4	66	387,25			
	5 <sup>b</sup>	115	323,43			
	6	94	339,36			
	7	126	326,76			
	8	118	301,59			
	9 <sup>a</sup>	49	422,92			
	10	62	399,17			
	Total	689				

Note:\*p&lt;0,05.

When Table 7 is examined, a statistically significant relationship was found in favor of those who participated in international competitions in all sub-dimensions and total scores of SLIM. Therefore, participating in international competitions should be said to change the SLIM level positively compared to those who did not.

According to Kruskal Wallis test results between perceived challenge of the duties and measurement tools in Table 8, it was determined that there were significant relationships between SLIM and variables. Therefore, it was seen that the participants who described the self score of perceived challenge of the duties 9, showed a higher SLIM level compared to the other grades.

**Table-9.** Kruskal Wallis test results between perceived skill development and SLIM.

	Perceived skill development (point)	n	Mean rank	df	x <sup>2</sup>	p
SLIM (self-scoring range of 1 to 10)	3 or less <sup>g</sup>	42	290,64	7	42,205	0,000*
	4 <sup>f</sup>	43	271,73			
	5	97	304,90			
	6 <sup>d</sup>	94	325,61			
	7 <sup>e</sup>	156	320,63			
	8 <sup>c</sup>	144	381,03			
	9 <sup>b</sup>	52	427,57			
	10 <sup>a</sup>	61	434,61			
	Total	689				
Identification with pursuit and Social outcomes	3 or less	42	317,10	7	25,453	0,001*
	4 <sup>e</sup>	43	281,98			
	5	97	330,78			
	6 <sup>d</sup>	94	325,79			
	7	156	316,88			
	8 <sup>c</sup>	144	371,25			
	9 <sup>b</sup>	52	412,12			
	10 <sup>a</sup>	61	413,61			
	Total	689				
Perseverance and Leisure career	3 or less <sup>f</sup>	42	283,10	7	56,055	0,000*
	4 <sup>g</sup>	43	261,12			
	5 <sup>e</sup>	97	287,84			
	6 <sup>d</sup>	94	317,81			
	7 <sup>d</sup>	156	329,49			
	8 <sup>c</sup>	144	384,41			
	9 <sup>a</sup>	52	453,07			
	10 <sup>b</sup>	61	434,06			
	Total	689				
Individual outcomes	3 or less <sup>g</sup>	42	281,26	7	31,592	0,000*
	4 <sup>f</sup>	43	292,80			
	5	97	316,31			
	6 <sup>d</sup>	94	351,30			
	7 <sup>e</sup>	156	314,91			
	8 <sup>c</sup>	144	369,08			
	9 <sup>b</sup>	52	402,76			
	10 <sup>a</sup>	61	432,46			
	Total	689				

Note: \*p<0,05.

**Table-10.** Kruskal Wallis test results between perceived total development and SLIM.

	Perceived total development	n	Mean rank	df	x <sup>2</sup>	p
SLIM	Better <sup>a</sup>	316	406,44	2	56,100	0,000*
	Same <sup>b</sup>	256	297,43			
	Worse <sup>c</sup>	117	283,15			
	Total	689				
Identification with pursuit and Social outcomes	Better <sup>a</sup>	316	389,83	2	29,811	0,000*
	Same <sup>c</sup>	256	306,76			
	Worse <sup>b</sup>	117	307,59			
	Total	689				
Perseverance and Leisure career	Better <sup>a</sup>	316	417,23	2	79,695	0,000*
	Same <sup>b</sup>	256	294,08			
	Worse <sup>c</sup>	117	261,34			
	Total	689				
Individual outcomes	Better <sup>a</sup>	316	396,98	2	40,336	0,000*
	Same <sup>c</sup>	256	299,90			
	Worse <sup>b</sup>	117	303,28			
	Total	689				

Note: \*p<0,05.

When the Kruskal Wallis test results examined between the perceived skill development level and SLIM in Table 9, it was seen that significant differences between in sub-dimensions and total scores of SLIM. Accordingly, it was observed that the participants who stated their perceived skill development levels' as increased between 9 and 10, showed higher SLIM levels compared to the other grades.

According to Kruskal Wallis test results between perceived total development level and measurement tools in [Table 10](#), it was seen that there were significant relationships between SLIM and variables. Therefore, it was understood that the participants who described the perceived total development level as “better”, showed a higher SLIM level compared to the other groups.

#### 4. Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to clarify serious leisure perspectives of semi-professional and professional athletes. In addition, it's aimed to determine the relationship and differences between serious leisure characteristics with career progress (perceived skill development and total development) and some variables.

As a result of the analyzes, it was determined that athletes have higher serious leisure scores. The highest subscale score was “identification with pursuit and social outcomes” and the lowest subscale score was “individual outcomes”. Research into serious leisure has illustrated that the chosen activity becomes a central aspect of the participants' lives: ‘it is time, resource, and therefore identity intensive’ (Gillespie, Leffler, & Lerner, 2002). It has also been argued that identity should be considered the central concept for understanding serious leisure, whereas the other five characteristics could be outcomes of developing this identity (Jones, 2006; Shipway & Jones, 2007). Findings of an another study suggest that serious leisure pursuers in sport are in a central life interest as they were fully invested physically and mentally to their activity (Dubin, 1992). Heo and King (2009) found that serious sport participants tended to invest personal efforts and perseverance through the training process and dedicated their time to travel for various tournaments outside of their community. In different studies found that unique ethos influences participants' practices in yoga (Patterson, Getz, & Gubb, 2016) and marathon (Robinson, Patterson, & Axelsen, 2014) accordingly unique ethos enables participants at various levels to perceive their experiences as autonomy-supportive.

It was seen that the gender differences between serious leisure scores, there is a significant difference between the Individual outcomes sub-dimensions and the gender variable. In the Individual outcomes sub-dimension, it was determined that women athletes displayed higher development scores than men. In the study of Dilley and Scraton (2010) on women climbers as serious leisure, they indicate that: The women climbers identified their climbing as a serious leisure pursuit clearly demonstrating many of the qualities Stebbins has characterized as defining serious leisure. They pursued their climbing systematically, demonstrated perseverance, acquired specialist skills and knowledge, identified individual benefits they had gained such as belonging and feelings of accomplishment and they certainly associated with their activity. However, the data suggest that serious leisure is about far more than the activity itself. Their leisure is centrally about creating, negotiating and/or resisting ideological expectations (about physicality, motherhood) and creating individual spaces to ‘be’ and social spaces to ‘belong’ and be ‘different’.

According to results between sports' branch and serious leisure scores, it was observed that significant differences between in sub-dimensions and total scores of SLIM. Accordingly, it has been determined that professional athletes in the volleyball branch gave higher serious leisure levels compared to the participants in other branches. According to Cheng and Tsaour (2012) unique ethos, strong identity with the activity, significant personal efforts and career pursuits in their endeavors are strong indicators of surfers' serious leisure characteristics. Generally, surfers with higher serious leisure characteristics have a higher recreation involvement. In other words, serious leisure attributes are the antecedents of recreation involvement. In addition; findings of the relationships among serious leisure and recreation involvement dimensions show that strong identity with the activity, perseverance, career pursuits in their endeavors and unique ethos are significantly associated with attraction. This result indicates that surfers with serious leisure characteristics can strongly identify with the activity, demonstrate perseverance in the activity, and endeavors under adversity.

When the test results examined between the perceived skill development level and serious leisure scores, it was seen that significant differences between in sub-dimensions and total scores of SLIM. Accordingly, it was observed that the participants who stated their perceived skill development levels' as increased between 9 and 10, showed higher SLIM levels compared to the other grades. A study of participation in adaptive sports as a serious leisure pursuit indicated a positive relationship between participants' self-determination and skill level. Further, sport skill development was related to participants gaining social rewards and physical improvements, as well as enhancing their self-determination to pursue serious leisure (Jinmoo Heo, Lee, Lundberg, McCormick, & Chun, 2008). In a different study, Lewis, Patterson, and Pegg (2013) states as; motorcycle road racing becomes a more serious leisure activity as racers become more committed to regular competition, increasing their skill levels and seeking membership in motorcycle clubs. For the young racer in particular, there is a growing commitment to develop higher level skills a means of self-improvement which can ultimately lead to a career pathway in this sport for those who seek it.

According to test results between perceived total development level and serious leisure level, it was understood that the participants who described the perceived total development level as “better”, showed a higher SLIM level compared to the other groups. According to Ronkainen et al. (2017) commitment, high levels of effort, hard work and acceptance of pain and discomfort, are often central values for serious runners. In the study of Hungling, Caneday, and Tapps (2013) it was found that community sports program participants' strong identification of serious leisure was the most robust indicator reflecting the amateur athletes' seriousness of their leisure pursuit. In a different research, it's mentioned that serious leisure participants often discover leisure careers that reflect stages of experience, such as “occasional dancers,” “wannabes,” and “hard-core dancers” or “therapeutic players,” “social golfers,” “moderate devotees” and “core devotees” (Heo, Lee, Kim, & Stebbins, 2012; Siegenthaler & O'Dell, 2003).

#### 5. Conclusion

Sports, exercise and physical activities have an important place among serious leisure activities. In terms of being easily accessible, easy participation, perseverance, effort, competition, entertainment, self-expression and socialization; It is an area where individuals can establish strong unique ethos with the sport they are dealing with and feel belonging and devotion.

The individual, who started the sport at an early age for hobby purposes, or guided by family for avoiding bad habits, by emulating of his peers or influenced by the team he support, or discovered in an organized talent selection, has experienced six qualities of Stebbins' for serious leisure. In line with these qualities, that can be experienced as a hobbyist, amateur or volunteer. Therefore it could be thought that; the individual who shows high effort and perseverance for his sports, who is devoted to it and who does not give up in moments of breaking with certain turning points, has achieved a career in sports via serious leisure, at some point of this journey.

This study measured the serious leisure levels of semi-professional and professional athletes who had reached a certain career through their own serious leisure pursues, and found positive relationships between all the sub-dimensions and parameters in the scale that represent the characteristics of the serious leisure perspective. In the light of the explanations above, based on the findings of this study, it can be said that pursuing a career in professional sports is associated with the serious leisure theory and that the career process in sports can be explained with the serious leisure perspective.

Due to their camps and intense competition schedule, the difficulty of reaching the athletes and having a meeting within the scope of the research was among the most important limitations of this study. In the future researches, different sports branches can be discussed and international comparisons can be made.

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