

ETHICAL ISSUES IN TURKISH SPORT MEDIA: PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS

Zafer ÇİMEN

Gazi University, School of Physical Education and Sport, Department of Sport Management, Abant Sokak, Yenimahalle, Ankara, Turkey

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of professional football players on the obedience of the Turkish Sport Media to journalistic ethical codes. This study was based on feedback received from professional football players (N=138) whose ages ranged from $20 \leq (n=30)$, $21-30 (n=53)$ and $31 \geq (n=55)$ years, representing 10 teams participating in Turkey's Super League. Each participant evaluated a series of five statements related to the media's news gathering techniques, treatment of their personal lives, prevalence of gossip, general accuracy of news stories, as well as the tendency of the media to stimulate and encourage violence. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the Kruskal-Wallis Non-Parametric test were used to analyse the data. It was determined that the ethical codes, namely gossip, private life and honesty are frequently violated, and the ethical codes, namely newsgathering and violence are sometimes violated. According to these results, Turkish sport media outlets are plagued with significant ethical code difficulties.

Key words: Ethical code; Sports media; Professional Football players.

INTRODUCTION

The media plays a significant role in today's world. Of importance is its effect on the general perception within a society (Hughes & Shank, 2005; Lee, 2005) and the provision of a public forum for debate about important social issues (Moy *et al.*, 2003). The media's ability to function constructively in these roles is directly related to its acceptance of and adherence to certain ethical codes. Therefore, all media workers are required to abide by the official ethical codes regardless of the country from which they report as governed by the members of various regional and international media associations. Similar lists of ethical codes are issued by the associations and are directed to specific fields of the media, such as sport. The members of these associations are requested to abide by these ethical codes.

Similarly, the Turkish Press Council (1987) adopted sixteen Journalism Principles, including ethical codes, in 1987. These universally accepted ethical codes speak directly to items such as conflicts of interest (Wulfemeyer, 1985), honesty (Nichols *et al.*, 2002), receiving gifts (Douglas, 1983), newsgathering methods (Lambeth *et al.*, 2004), fairness (Voakes, 2000), privacy (Herrscher, 2002; Whitehouse & McPherson, 2002; Ward, 2005), moonlighting and news sources (Lo *et al.*, 2005) and plagiarism (Reader, 2006).

These ethical codes may include similar or different items. For example, cultural differences and the uncertainty of the ethical codes do not allow the formation of a guideline that can be wholly understood. For this reason, media employees must evaluate their professional practices within the framework of socially accepted ethical standards, the ethical codes that govern their professional study areas, as well as their own consciences. The issue of ethical reporting is further complicated by the fact that there is not a general consensus on the issue. As a result, journalists may implement different principles that can be defended morally (Nichols *et al.*, 2002).

In journalism, as with other media, common manifested ethical values generally determine the written ethical codes. By agreeing on these standards, organisations provide a solid ethical foundation for the journalists (Garrison & Salzven, 1994). It is important to remember that ethical codes are not related only to journalists. They also apply to educators in the field of journalism, as well as to the society as a whole (Lo *et al.*, 2005). However, according to Hardin (2005a), while the list of ethical codes helps to explain ethical issues, determine preliminary and behaviour standards and is accepted as valuable for journalism, it cannot guarantee the ethical behaviours and cannot resolve ethical problems. For this reason, ethical codes remain a problematic area in journalism.

In the light of this generally weak image of journalism, as well as the daily violations of the media's ethical codes (Wulfemeyer, 1985), sport journalism is widely viewed as the media discipline in which the majority of these ethical problems are experienced (Hardin, 2005a). Similar observations are noted in the Turkish sport media and sport journalism. The practice is widely tolerated since media outlets are conveying non-ethical news, especially by sport clubs, coaches, managers and players (Uzun, 2004). Many of the ethical code violations are related to football, which is the most popular sport in Turkey. These infractions take their toll on football clubs, players, coaches and club managers. Unfortunately, little effort is made to either verify sources or confirm the accuracy of information about the players who are the source and subject of the news. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine public perceptions of the extent to which professional football players and the Turkish sport media abide by the ethical codes.

Football in Turkey

Football, which currently is the most popular sport in Turkey, first began to draw attention more than 20 years ago. Today football takes an important place in the media alongside economic and political issues. As a result, daily newspapers now allocate more pages for sport, the number of the sport magazines has dramatically increased, and there are more sport programs and live broadcasts of sport matches and competitions on television. The commercialised media devotes more attention to professional, team and men's sport than they do to amateur, individual, women's (Cunningham & Sagas, 2002; Pedersen, 2002; Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Hardin, 2005b) and disabled sport (Hardin & Hardin, 2003). For example, although 40% of the people participating in sport in the United States of America (USA) are women, they receive far less than 40% of the media coverage as compared to the men (Kane, 2007:394).

In addition, sport with higher revenue potential command greater privileges than sport aimed at active participation (Boyle & Haynes, 2000). This cycle is further perpetuated as demand for these sports also generate revenue for media outlets (Boyle & Haynes, 2002) encouraging a greater emphasis on sport with commercial opportunities (Bennett *et al.*, 2006). Developments in the Turkish sport media continue to run parallel to developments around the world. For example, at the end of the 1980s, with football's ever-increasing popularity, it became the primary focus of the sport media in Turkey. As the popularity of football continues to increase, especially in Turkey's Premier League (Turkish Football Super League TFSL), its role as an important industry will also continue to expand. This is comparable with other countries, namely the United Kingdom (UK), Italy and Spain (Lee, 2005) not to mention other countries (Cerrahoğlu, 2004).

This high interest is best illustrated by citing the following examples. For instance, the number of sport fan associations of all the TFSL teams' numbers in the thousands (Uygur, 2003) and, during the 2008-2009 football season, 400 000-550 000 sport fans attended matches every weekend. During that same period, over 200 football matches of the TFSL, Turkey Cup, Champions League and UEFA Cup were broadcast live, not to mention live broadcasts from the UK, France, Spain and Italy leagues. As a result, millions of people watched football and followed what happened via written and visual media. It is inevitable, then, that the sport pages of daily newspapers, sport newspapers, sport magazines, television stations and many internet websites are interested in football and, in particular, the TFSL. It is widely accepted that media coverage increases both the participation of spectators at sporting events, as well as media usage itself as spectators who actively follow sporting events also follow those events in the media (Pritchard & Funk, 2006).

As stated by Foster *et al.* (2006:344), "the live broadcast of matches which are likely to have uncertain outcomes binds the sport fans to each other while allowing each to enjoy a slightly different experience". This trend has begun to make its mark on football matches. So, the sport media whether TV, cable, Internet and written media, each undertake important roles in broadcasting matches to people watching the matches live or to fans who are unable to attend the events. As a result, each media outlet is an important part of the machine ensuring the spread of football to society and stimulates increased interest of sport fans in the organisations, leagues, matches, clubs and players through pre- and post-match/game analyses.

As a result, for some countries, broadcasting more live football matches/games not only increases ratings and football news, but it also is directly proportional to the increase in sales of newspapers and sport magazines (Boyle & Haynes, 2000). For example, 69.2% of the columnists and sport correspondents in Turkey cover football news (İlhan, 2004:66), 72.9% of the news on sport pages in daily newspapers is related to football (Uzun, 2001:173) and sport programs on television are largely dominated by football (Cerrahoğlu, 2004). Moreover, 52.7% of people in Turkey use the word 'football' synonymously instead of the word 'sport' (Turkish Football Federation, 2005:25).

Naturally, football news is very important for Turkish football fans, spectators and those interested in football following the sport media. For this reason, the commercialised sport, football, and the commercialised media sector exert various efforts in order to maintain and

increase their market share. For example, the Turkish sport media violate ethical codes in order to increase the interest and attract more spectators, when sport clubs implement flash transfers. This is one of the easiest ways to increase advertisement and sponsor revenue by selling more newspapers and magazines, as well as increasing ratings (Uzun, 2004).

Football as the dominant sport in Turkey ensures that football organisations and persons involved in football (players, coaches, managers) enjoy important positions and occupy a greater percentage of media coverage as compared to other sport and organisations. Therefore, this level of coverage means that football organisations and people in these organisations are influenced by the unethical news, images and comments in the Turkish sport media in much larger percentages than other organisations and people. The TFSL's professional players are the most affected by this as they are the most attractive news material for sport media.

Ethical codes and the Turkish sport media

As in other areas around the world, sales and rating concerns driven by commercialisation are the major factors contributing to Turkey's violation of ethical codes (Cerrahoğlu, 2004). Add to this the fact that various media tools with recently developing technology, such as the Internet, allow for the instant dissemination of information. Thus, legal controls are becoming harder to impose. Some of the ethical codes recognised by the Turkish Press Council are considered in this study and examples are given below.

Private life: The journalistic code of ethics prevents making news about people's private lives without their consent. As in many countries, football fans are more interested in the images, personalities, nightclub adventures and especially private lives of football players than their professional performance (Lee, 2005). Naturally, public demand drives sport media outlets to cover these areas. Newspapers, in particular, see the coverage of the private lives of the players as essential to be able to compete with the television networks and not lose readership (Uzun, 2004). In Turkey, it is the professional football players and coaches whose private lives are frequently intruded upon who most often complain about this coverage. Sometimes foreign football players playing in Turkey are swept up in the frenzy as stated in the press release by Kezman, the Serbian football player who is a member of the Fenerbahçe Club, one of the major Turkish teams (*Miliyet Gazetesi*, 2007):

Ortega, Van Hooijdonk, Anelka and Appiah also experienced what I have experienced. That is, the problem is not with the players here, but with the press. This is my last interview for this year. I have taken this decision to protect myself and my family. The media has started to be very oppressive, and because of this I don't have a private life anymore.

In another example, pictures of the head-scarved wife of the coach of Besiktas, an important TFSL team, which were irrelevant and in no way related to sport, appeared in the sport media for days. Finally, coach Sağlam made this statement (*Sabah Gazetesi*, 2007):

Inaccurate representations have been made about my private life. I am opposed to these kinds of stories. They are unnecessary and inappropriate. We live in the 21st century and bringing these items related to language, religious views and the races

of people to the sport platform is unnecessary. It is my work [and] not my wife that should attract attention.

Honesty: Honesty, is at the top of the list of the ethical codes (Andrew & Chadwick, 1998; Nichols *et al.*, 2002). Honesty affects the news, items, photos and the images reflecting reality. For this reason, journalists have the responsibility to be absolutely honest in their work and writing (Andrew & Chadwick, 1998). The following frequently experienced example highlights the challenges in the Turkish sport media related to honesty (Uzun, 2004:4):

“Turkish journalists were competing with each other in order to have their photo taken with Beckham as if they were his fan. We - as the other football players who were present there - thought it was a souvenir photo. Then when we came back to Turkey, we saw that photo in the newspaper with the caption: ‘Beckham answered our colleague’s questions sincerely’.”

Newsgathering: Another ethical issue refers to the searching for and gathering of news in appropriate ways and methods. Of particular concern is the rise of modern technology such as micro and hidden cameras and sound recorders, which facilitate the work of reporters. People in the public eye now find themselves subject to intensive hidden surveillance. Magazines concentrating on sport news often use this method. In addition, news may be simply created by finding photos and fabricating captions beneath the images. Uzun (2004:5) gives a good example of how the sport media produce news without undertaking research:

“Before training, a correspondent spoke to Günes who was [the] technical coach of the Turkish national football team. ‘The boss wanted me to have a photo taken with you.’ First, Günes rejected this request, then relaxed and said: ‘What will you write below the photo?’ The correspondent replied: ‘Actually, I will not write anything. My boss will write it. He will write in any way even if you do or do not have your photo taken...’”

Violence: News items, photos and images should not include elements of violence, which encourage people to be violent. According to Kane (2007:409), the following factors contribute to violence in sport: team sports whose teams are comprised of men, sport practised at the elite level, and financially profitable sport. The connection between sport and violence has become an area of interest especially in recent academic studies (Bernstein & Blain, 2002). This, in turn, has increased the level of media coverage related to acts of violence observed in sport.

Football and violence frequently go hand in hand in Turkey. There is a general perception that the media often stimulate the violence in football (Sazak, 2004; *Sporvizyon*, 2006). As a matter of fact, a research committee has been formed in the Turkish Grand National Assembly to study the ubiquitous subject of ‘violence in football’. This research includes football spectators who have been involved in acts of violence in football matches in four provinces where some of Turkey’s more important football teams are located. According to the police records, 51.7% of the football spectators involved in violence stated that they were affected before the game by the news in the sport media and 33.3% stated that they were partially affected (Turkish Grand National Assembly, 2005:55).

In fact, although it is possible to deliver news, which may stimulate violence due to the language used, the media is also capable of presenting the news in a way that will not encourage violence. It appears that the Turkish sport media prefers the language of violence as it is more striking and sensational. The following are examples from daily newspaper headlines: “Fans tangle with each other” (*Sabah Gazetesi*, 2004); “Bloodshed in Uşak” (*Star Gazetesi*, 2005); “Bloody placard revenge” (*Vatan Gazetesi*, 2007); and “Football players powder keg” (*Hürriyet Gazetesi*, 2004).

Gossip: This particular code states that news, items, photos and images should not be exaggerated and should not emanate from gossip. In the Turkish sport media, there are reporters assigned to follow each club and are tasked to create news every day for the media that employs them. This pressure to find news items in a limited time results in reporters resorting to gossip to create the news stories (Uzun, 2004; Yücelman, 2006). Below is an example of this process (Uzun, 2004:4).

“We were in the camp before the first game that we played against England on 2nd April. An article in the sport page of one of the important Turkish newspapers stated that Bobby Robson and Haluk Ulusoy (President of Turkey Football Federation) had made a bet on the outcome of the national game. In the evening before training, when all the reporters were together, Ulusoy turned to the reporter who had written the article and said: ‘My brother, how do you make up such thing? I have never met Robson before’”.

Although it is thought that visual elements used by media increase the ethical reasoning (Coleman, 2006), Turkish sport media may use them in order to simply increase the persuasiveness of unethical “gossip” news (Uzun, 2004:4):

“Headline of a newspaper from National Football Team camp: İlhan: ‘I want Nihat as striker’ and a photo of İlhan together with Nihat. Throughout the camp, the national players posed for media only on one day and on that day, İlhan and Nihat were never together. However, İlhan had a photo taken with Yıldırım. When we carefully looked at the newspaper, we saw that the Nihat’s head had been pasted over Yıldırım’s body”.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent the Turkish sport media adhere to ethical codes. The constant media exposure of professional football players and their perceptions of the extent to which the Turkish sport media abide by journalistic ethical codes was the basis for this study. The research statements of this study which were based on Turkish Press Council Journalism Principles (1987) and literature were as follows:

1. Sport media make the private lives of sport-related persons the subject of the news even though their private lives do not benefit the public.
2. Sport media make news from incorrect or inaccurate information, and do not attach importance to honesty.
3. Sport media research news through inappropriate ways and tools, such as using news of other sources without approval and via hidden cameras.
4. Sport media encourage violence.

5. Sport media provide a forum for gossip.

Perceptions of football players regarding these five items about the codes of ethics in Turkish sport media tools, showed some meaningful differences on statements according to the level of following the media tools, the level of appearing in the media tools and age.

Participants

This study was executed during the 2008-2009 football-seasons. The sample consisted of 138 (approximately 30% of the players in TFSL) male professional football players from 10 different TFSL teams in Turkey. Their ages ranged from ≤ 20 (n=30), 21-30 (n=53) and $31 \geq$ (n=55) years. The participants of this study were randomly selected and were attractive news material and were affected by unethical news, images and comments of the Turkish sport media.

Measures

In the first step, the 16 Media Principles recognised by the Turkish Press Council were examined, and a literature survey on media ethics was undertaken and various issues were determined and discussed with experts (N=7) in this field. Based on recommendations from the experts, 5 items (gossip, honesty, newsgathering, encourage violence, private lives) related to ethical issues were deemed to be sufficient in measuring professional football players' perceptions of the ethical codes in Turkish Sport Media. The participants rated the 5 research statements ranging from 1 (indicating never) to 5 (indicating always) accordingly. The demographics and age of the respondents, their following level of sport media tools and their appearing level in the sport media were determined initially.

Analyses

In the statistical evaluation of the study, the following data were collected: Age of the participants, the frequency of following the media (6-7 days per week, 3-5 days per week, 1-2 days per week and never), and the frequency of players, teams, coaches and managers appearing in the media (6-7 days per week, 3-5 days per week, 1-2 days per week and no coverage). These variables were analysed in terms of frequency (f) and percentage (%). Differences between the perceptions of players were assessed by applying the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in terms of 'age' and 'media coverage' and the Kruskal-Wallis Non-Parametric test in terms of 'following media tools'.

RESULTS

Based on players following sport media tools, it was found that 77 players (55.8%) follow the media for '6-7 days' per week, 47 players (34.1%) follow the media for '3-5 days' per week and 14 players follow the media (10.1%) for '1-2 days' per week. Regarding the players themselves, their teams, coaches and their managers, any of them become the subject of news in sport media on '3-5 days' per week (46%), '6-7 days' per week (30%) and '1-2 days' per week (24%) respectively.

In this study, the professional football players' perception of the observation of the ethical codes by the Turkish Sport Media was measured across 5 items. The perceptions of the subjects are presented in Table 1 with frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation values.

TABLE 1: PERCEPTIONS OF ETHICAL CODES OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS IN RELATION TO THE TURKISH SPORTS MEDIA

	Never	Rarely	Some times	Fre- quently	Always		
Ethical codes	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	Mean	SD
Private life	- (-)	3 (2.2)	18 (13.0)	83 (60.1)	34 (24.6)	4.08	0.68
Honesty/Truthfulness	1 (0.7)	3 (2.2)	19 (13.8)	77 (55.8)	38 (27.5)	4.07	0.75
News gathering	1 (0.7)	2 (1.4)	27 (19.6)	77 (55.8)	31 (22.5)	3.98	0.74
Stimulate/Encourage violence	- (-)	4 (2.9)	29 (21.0)	79 (57.2)	26 (18.8)	3.92	0.72
Gossip	- (-)	1 (0.7)	24 (17.4)	65 (47.1)	48 (34.8)	4.16	0.73

According to Table 1, the football players generally marked *frequently* and *always* regarding their perceptions about the violation of the above ethical codes by Turkish sport media. When the total of the *frequently* and *always* choices were evaluated; the lowest percentage value (76.0%) was seen in the item of 'stimulating violence', the highest percentage (84.7%) was in the item of 'private life'. The lowest average value (Mean=3.92) was again observed in the item of 'stimulating violence' whereas the highest average value (Mean=4.16) was seen in the item of 'gossip' news.

TABLE 2: ANOVA RESULTS ACCORDING TO AGE

Ethical Codes	20 ≤ (n=30)		21-30 (n=53)		31 ≥ (n=55)		F-value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Private life	3.70	0.79	4.13	0.59	4.21	0.63	6.449*
Honesty/Truthfulness	3.93	0.83	4.00	0.85	4.22	0.57	1.818
News gathering	4.00	0.79	4.00	0.78	3.95	0.68	0.089
Stimulate/Encourage violence	3.80	0.81	3.94	0.66	3.96	0.72	0.549
Gossip	4.17	0.79	4.13	0.73	4.18	0.70	0.064

* Significance 0.05 level

Generally, the results of this study provide valuable support for the research statements of the study. There was a meaningful difference between the points related to the 'private life' of football players ($F_{(2,135)}=6.449$; $p<0.01$) as related to age. According to the results of the Tukey HSD test, for the 'private life' item, a meaningful difference was found between the points of ≤ 20 age group (Mean=3.70), 21-30 age group (Mean=4.13) and $31 \leq$ age group (Mean=4.21) related to the age variable. Subjects who were younger (≤ 20) scored lower than older subjects (21-30 and $31 \leq$) (Table 2).

TABLE 3: ANOVA RESULTS ACCORDING TO COVERAGE IN MEDIA

Ethical Codes	6-7 days p.w. (n=39)		3-5 days p.w. (n=64)		1-2 days p.w. (n=35)		F-value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Private life	4.17	0.64	4.03	0.69	4.03	0.71	4.889*
Honesty/Truthfulness	4.23	0.63	4.16	0.72	3.74	0.85	3.095*
News gathering	4.05	0.89	4.08	0.72	3.71	0.52	0.671
Stimulate/Encourage violence	3.87	0.92	4.03	0.62	3.77	0.60	1.632
Gossip	4.18	0.72	4.20	0.69	4.06	0.80	0.473

* Significance 0.05 level

As suggested in the research statements, there were meaningful differences between the groups regarding the items of 'honesty' ($F_{(2-135)}=4.889$; $p<0.01$) and 'newsgathering' ($F_{(2-135)}=3.095$; $p<0.01$) as covered in the media. According to the results of the post hoc multiple comparison test, a meaningful difference was found between the variables of those appearing in the media on '6-7 days' per week (Mean=4.23), for '3-5 days' per week (Mean=4.16) and on '1-2 days' per week (Mean=3.74) for the item 'honesty'. For 'newsgathering', a meaningful difference was found for '6-7 days' per week (Mean=4.05), '3-5 days' per week (Mean=4.08) and '1-2 days' per week (Mean=3.71) in accordance with the duration of appearing in the media. It was determined that the participants who appeared in the media more ('6-7 days' per week and '3-5 days' per week) scored higher than those who featured less in the media ('1-2' days per week) (Table 3).

TABLE 4: KRUSKAL-WALLIS TEST RESULTS ACCORDING TO FOLLOWING OF MEDIA TOOLS

Ethical codes	6-7 days p.w. (n=77)		3-5 days p.w. (n=47)		1-2 days p.w. (n=14)		X ²
	MR	df	MR	df	MR	df	
Private life	74.47	2	67.65	2	48.39	2	6.78*
Honesty/Truthfulness	69.16	2	71.48	2	64.71	2	0.40
News gathering	70.63	2	66.52	2	73.29	2	0.55
Stimulate/Encourage violence	71.85	2	65.82	2	68.93	2	0.83
Gossip	73.65	2	64.16	2	64.61	2	2.21

*Significance 0.05 level

The analysis also indicates that 'private life' scores of participants differentiate meaningfully regarding their status of "following media tools" ($X^2(2)=6.78$, $p<0.01$). This finding shows that the duration of following media has different effects in the aspect of 'private life' (Table 4).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Recently, issues related to sport media such as violence, gender, marketing and commodification, race and sport, fandom and spectator experiences (Bernstein & Blain,

2002) have shed light on issues related to the code of ethics for sport media. Despite being a frequently discussed topic, relatively few studies about sport media and ethics in Turkey have been reported. The most important aspect of this study is that it is based on the perceptions of professional football players who themselves often appear in the media as the subject and source of news and follow sport media as reader/audience. The most important finding of this study is that professional football players perceive that the Turkish sport media continually violate the ethical codes.

According to the perceptions of professional football players, treating gossip as factual news is the most often violated ethical code by the Turkish sport media. The most important factor of the coverage of gossip news on the Turkish sport media is that clubs and football players whose numbers of fans are high, appear more frequently in the sport media. Media employees who cannot find adequate news about these clubs and football players attempt to remedy this shortfall by using gossip as news. As a result, the ethical code is violated.

The private lives of people who appear in the public eye are always of interest. The objective of the media in making news about these people is to increase the interest in their media tools. However, in the news made regarding these people, it should not be forgotten that the confidentiality of a person's private life should always be respected. Football players whose private lives become the subject of the news believe that this ethical code is severely violated. Furthermore, football players who follow the sport media more ('6-7 days' per week and '3-5 days' per week) and those who follow less ('1-2 days' per week) and players at the age of 21 and over all perceive that the ethical code of 'private life' was continually violated. This stems from the fact that football players, who have the opportunity to follow the news in sport media closely, can evaluate the current situation better. Also, the private lives of the football players at the age of 21 and over are covered more in the media than younger players.

According to the perceptions of professional football players, the ethical code of 'honesty', which is seen as the basis for the ethical codes in general, is frequently violated by Turkish sport media. Furthermore, it is considerably meaningful that football players whose team's or own life is frequently subjected to news ('6-7 days' per week and '3-5' days' per week) find the sport media to have more issues in the ethical code of honesty. This finding corresponds with the general conviction of the public that "falsified and sensational news" concerning football is fabricated in order for the Turkish sport media to increase interest and market share in media.

In fact, it would not be wrong to state that the commercialisation of the media is the reason for the perception that these four ethical codes are violated so frequently. The public is aware that news is often made as an attempt by sport media outlets to attract more interest and to increase its sales or ratings. A statement by Bapçum (2004:26), one of Turkey's most important sport media journalists, supports the findings of the study. He said: "with the commercialisation of the media, sensation has got ahead of accurate and high-quality reporting in the sport media, too".

While the media is being commercialised, the emerging media culture has started to accept sport, particularly football, as a commercial tool and abandoned its social and cultural importance (Boyle & Haynes, 2002). Therefore, sport have begun to be seen as purely a

commercial commodity, which attracts the interest of the customer and increases the consumption. Thus, economic policies drive the need to increase sales and advertisement incomes for the media outlets (Horne, 2005). When journalism studies are examined, variables related to commercialisation, such as news organisation ownership, newsroom influences, competition, subjects and sources, advertisers, audience, and organisation size (Coleman, 2006), all affected the ethical decisions of media employees.

Apart from the four ethical codes mentioned earlier, news research methodology is an ethical code that sometimes is violated. Football players who themselves are many times the source of news are able to observe the sport media's research methods more easily. The general consensus of the players is that ethical code violations are also experienced widely. This is a striking finding in terms of the Turkish sport media.

The ethical code which was believed to be violated the least in this study was the idea that the sport media encourages violence. These perceptions of the football players are very interesting since the sport media is often the first element blamed by the coaches, club managers, football circles, even politicians and the general society for inciting violence.

Some events experienced after the 1990's with the media and sport media contribute to the beliefs and perceptions of the football players about the fact that the Turkish sport media frequently violates the ethical codes. The first and the most important reason is the increase in the number of media tools and the circulation/rating concerns caused by the competition between them. That is, commercial concerns stimulate owners of media tools to earn more and the employees ignore the ethical codes in order to maintain their positions. The second reason is that the football circles, those people who are interested in professional football, want the commercialisation of the sport as much as the media. It is in their interest for the game to remain popular. Therefore, they are complicit in maintaining the unethical news and methods of the media. For similar commercial concerns, professional football and football circles shift the focus of interest to sensational news to ensure that professional football retains a high position in the minds of the public.

As with other media outlets around the world, the task of the sport media in Turkey should be to inform, educate, entertain and create a healthy society through the news it delivers. Its goal should be "to increase the popularity of sport in general and contribute to its spread in society" (Girgin, 2000; TGNA, 2005:53). It can be said that the realisation of these tasks and the benefits of the media for society is directly proportional to its adherence to the ethical codes.

In conclusion, this study has shown that professional football players perceive that Turkish sport media frequently violate ethical codes. This result supports the determinations of the Commission Report of Research in Sport Violence of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA, 2005:54) and Uzun's (2004:19) opinions: "reasons such as preventing promotion of some responsible journalists who do not make sensational news due to commercial concerns, the presence of many journalists who are not concerned about the validity of the information and research, and the inconsistency of the news and comments, some sport reporters behaving like they are the friends of the club inadequacy of the sport knowledge and culture are seen as the most criticized issues and the obstacles to behaving in accordance with ethical codes".

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