

Relative Age Effect in Turkish Women Football

Türk Kadın Futbolunda Göreceli Yaş Etkisi

*Bahadır Bayarslan¹, Damla Özsoy², Gökhan Dokuzoğlu³

¹ Istanbul Topkapı University, Faculty of Sport Science, Istanbul, TÜRKİYE / bhdbrbyrsln@gmail.com / 0000-0002-1665-7846

² Yalova University, Faculty of Sport Science, Yalova, TÜRKİYE / damla.ozsoy@yalova.edu.tr / 0000-0002-1879-9370

³ Aydın Provincial Directorate of National Education, Aydın, TÜRKİYE / gkhndkz9@gmail.com / 0000-0001-5407-4927

* Corresponding author

Abstract: In this study, it was aimed to examine the relative age effect of female football players playing in the Turkish Women's Super League and 1st League teams in the 2022-2023 Season. Working group; while the female football players playing licensed in the women's football leagues affiliated to the Turkish Football Federation constitute the sample, the players in the Women's Football Super League and the 1st League teams constitute the sample. While determining the sample, the density sampling method was preferred. Density sampling is generally used by studies involving the heuristic approach. The heuristic approach is accepted as the only research approach that enables individuals to establish subjective and creative relationships between the person researching their experiences and the facts. In the model of the research; The "Basic Qualitative Research" technique, the "Document Analysis" method in the data collection tool and the Miles-Huberman analysis method, which is a descriptive analysis method, were used in the analysis. This study was conducted by considering female football players of different skill levels and chronological ages. The aim of the study was to compare the birth date of female football players. In the findings part of the study; Birth dates of 1552 female football players were revealed. It was determined that 863 female football players were born in the first six months of the year and 689 female football players were born in the last six months of the year. In addition, although the number of athletes born in the first 6 months of the election year in the Women's Football Super League Champion and 1st League Champion teams is higher than the number of athletes born in the last 6 months; In the relegated teams, it was observed that the number of athletes born in the last 6 months of the election year was higher than the number of athletes born in the first 6 months.

Keywords: Football, Women Football, Relative Age Effect.

Özet: Bu çalışmada, 2022-2023 Sezonu Türkiye Kadın Süper Ligi ve 1. Ligi takımlarında forma giyen kadın futbolcuların göreceli yaş etkisi durumlarının incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Çalışma grubunu; Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu'na bağlı kadın futbol liglerinde lisanslı oynayan kadın futbolcular oluştururken, örneklemini ise Kadın Futbol Süper Ligi ve 1. Ligi takımlarında yer alan oyuncular oluşturmuştur. Örneklem belirlenirken yoğunluk örnekleme yöntemi tercih edilmiştir. Yoğunluk örnekleme, olağandışı aksine araştırmaya konu edinilen ve en zengin bilgileri kapsayan örneklerdir. Yoğunluk örneklemini genellikle heuristik yaklaşımı içeren çalışmalar kullanılmaktadır. Heuristik yaklaşım, bireylerin tecrübelerini araştıran kişi ile olgular arasındaki öznal ve yaratıcı ilişkiler kurabilmesini sağlayan tek araştırma yaklaşımı olarak kabul edilmektedir. Araştırmanın modelinde; "Temel Nitel Araştırma" tekniği, veri toplama aracı "Döküman İncelemesi" metodu ve analizinde ise betimsel analiz biçimi olan Miles-Huberman analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışma, farklı beceri seviyeleri ve kronolojik yaşta kadın futbolcular dikkate alınarak yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın amacı kadın futbolcuların doğum tarihlerini karşılaştırmak olarak belirlenmiştir. Çalışmanın bulgular kısmında; 1552 kadın futbolcunun doğum tarihleri ortaya çıkarılmıştır. 863 kadın futbolcunun yılın ilk altı ayında 689 kadın futbolcunun ise yılın son altı ayında doğduğu tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, Kadın Futbol Süper Lig Şampiyonu ve 1. Lig Şampiyonu takımlarda seçim yılının ilk 6 ayı içerisinde doğan sporcu sayısının son 6 ay içerisinde doğan sporcu sayısından fazla olduğu, fakat küme düşen takımlarda ise seçim yılının son 6 ayı içerisinde doğan sporcu sayısının ilk 6 ay içerisinde doğan sporculardan daha fazla olduğu görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Futbol, Kadın Futbolu, Göreceli Yaş Etkisi.

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INTRODUCTION

With the Women's World Cup competitions organized by FIFA in 1991 and the acceptance of football for women as an Olympic branch in 1996, women's football started to gain momentum with the change in the international sports climate. According to UEFA's 'Women's football in national federations 2017' report, licensed female players across Europe increased from 1,270k in 2016 to 1,365k in 2017, an increase of 7.5% in one year. In Turkey, women's football is on its way to becoming popular lately (UEFA, 2023). On the official page of the Turkish Football Federation; It is expressed as Turkcell Women's Football Super League, Women's Football 1st League, Women's Football 2nd League, Women's Football 3rd League (TFF, 2023). The development of women's football in the world and in Türkiye makes it the subject of scientific studies. In European countries, most team sports, including football, consist of participants born between January 1 and December 31 of the same year, but sometimes spanning two years. Thus, 'a child born at the beginning of a given year will be almost 12 months older than another athlete born at the end of the same year. But they will still compete together (Gil et al., 2014). Grouping of athletes according to age categories is very common in sports (Bayarslan and Çevik, 2023). In particular, categories in team sports correspond to annual or biennial competition cycles in which the athlete is included in competition groups according

to their chronological age and a predetermined end date. (Gil et al., 2020). It is the "relative age effect" phenomenon, which is an important concept in other sports branches, especially football. Generally, the relative age effect is characterized by an over-representation of players who are relatively older than the year they were selected (Jackson and Comber, 2020). The relative age effect is one of the methodologies that helps managers and coaches select the best performers in player trials across age groups. Because there are tests such as anthropometric and physiological to define and improve the abilities of the players. These tests are; reveals the final performance of the players. The results show whether the person matures earlier than his teammates. Therefore, it is seen that older athletes have more opportunities than their other younger peers, in addition to reaching a higher sports level in terms of selection and competition performance (Till et al., 2010). As a matter of fact, if the person has reached an older or mature level, he becomes bigger, stronger and faster. Thus, it can gain superiority over other teammates and rivals (Andronikos et al., 2016). In this context, the literature on the relative age effect of female football players has been examined and very few studies have been found. In another research, Augste and Lames (2011) not only found evidence of RAE in U-17 German elite football, but were able to correlate a sports team's potential success with the birthdate

of its players. The higher the RAE, the higher the probability of finishing near the top of the league standings. Delorme et al. (2010) examined female football players in all youth categories between the ages of under 8 and under 17 in the French Football Federation. As a result of the study; They concluded that female football players are affected by the relative age effect. At the end of the research; They found that there was a significant relative age effect. In another study; Vincent and Glamser (2006) compared the relative age effect among 1,344 elite male and female soccer players in the U-17 USA Olympic Development Program. They stated that there is a relative age effect among female football players at the national and regional level, and there is no relative age effect for those who play women's football at the state level. The relative age effect has been extensively researched internationally in football and various sports, but most studies have focused heavily on professional elite male players. Today, FIFA and UEFA organizations give importance to women's football, the lack of academic studies on women's football and the desire to fill the gap in this field reveal the importance of our study. In addition, with the study we have carried out, it is thought that the age information, which is one of the criteria for female football players to be selected for the squads of the teams, will provide benefits to the clubs and national teams. In this study, it was aimed to examine the relative age effect of female football players playing in the 2022-2023 Season Turkish Women's Super League and Women's 1st League.

METHOD

Model of the Research: In the research, "Basic Qualitative Research Model" was used. Basic qualitative research; with different disciplines such as linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, such as health, sports, education, etc. It is a type of method that can be applied in many areas. The purpose of this method; It is the work of understanding and making sense of people's behaviors in their environment (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). The coordinator, who provides the basic qualitative research, investigates how individuals can interpret their lives, how they can construct the world they live in, and what meanings they can add to the experiences they have gained. Basic qualitative research; It aims to reveal the meanings that people create and to interpret these meanings (Merriam, 2013).

Purpose of the Research: This study was conducted by considering female football players of different skill levels and chronological ages. The aim of the study was to compare the birth date of female football players. In the study, it was aimed to reveal whether there is a relative age effect on female football players playing in the Turkish Women's Super League and the Women's 1st League in the 2022-2023 Season.

Research Group: Group of the research; while the female football players playing in the Turkish Football Federation Women's Football League teams were formed, the sample consisted of 1552 players in the Women's Football Super League and 1st League team squads. Density sampling method was used to determine the sample. Density sampling, contrary to the unusual, is the sample that is the subject of the research and covers the richest information (Morgan and

Morgan, 2008). Density sampling is generally used by studies involving the heuristic approach (Mays and Pope, 2000). The purpose of the heuristic approach; It is to make the information in the nature of facts and events discoverable and interpretable through the researcher's experiences and subjective explanations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The heuristic approach is accepted as the only research approach that enables individuals to establish subjective and creative relationships between the person researching their experiences and the facts (West, 2001).

Data Collection Tools of the Research: The content of the study was obtained from the libraries of various universities along with the relevant literature, academic databases. Turkish Football Federation – TFF official (<https://www.tff.org/> access date: 27.05.2023) and Maçolik (<https://www.mackolik.com/> access date: 27.05. 2023) was accessed from the official web pages. In the data collection tool of the research; "Document Review" technique was used. This pattern includes all kinds of information, visual and written material data, which are among the objectives of the study. According to Merriam (2013), there are four different documents that can be used in a qualitative research. The first and second of these; public records and personal papers, third; popular documents counted as cultural, and the fourth is visual documents that include pictures, videos, and movies. The data in this study; The first is public records.

Data Analysis of the Research: In this research, it is aimed to form a basis for data analysis with the theory known as 'Embedded Theory'. This type of analysis was developed by Glaser and Strauss (2006). Embedded theory is used both as a research strategy and as a data analysis method. Today, it is called the most impressive paradigm for qualitative research method (Ilgar and Ilgar, 2013). In embedded theory, data collection and data analysis are directly interrelated. Each collected data is directly compared with the next data, and in this way the comparison continues until the most common data is reached. The embedded theory method consists of systematic but flexible guidelines developed to collect and analyze qualitative data in order to create theories embedded in and derived from data (Charmaz, 2006). Data analysis in embedded theory is a well-defined process that begins with basic descriptions, continues with conceptual arrangement, and leads to theorizing (Patton, 2002). Embedded theory has turned into an excuse offered to the scientific world for a qualitative approach by enabling qualitative research to be evaluated according to quantitative standards (Atkinson, 1997). In this context, the Miles and Huberman model qualitative data analysis is essentially carried out in three steps: The first step is data reduction. Data reduction is the selection, examination, simplification, summary and transformation of the data obtained at the end of the research. In the second stage, data is displayed. Data representation is to create an organized version of the collected data to reveal the results. The third stage is inference/validation. Deduction/validation is to test the results in terms of validity, along with revealing causal relationships, patterns and possible structures between events and objects (Miles and Huberman, 2016). The reality, which is uncertain at the beginning of the research process and remains hidden in the data, is discovered and brought to light in the final stage.

RESULTS

Table 1: 2022-2023 Season Turkish Women Football Super League Teams and Number of Players

Team	Football Player	Born in First Half of the Year	Born in Last Half of the Year
ALG Spor	88	52	36
Altay	21	12	9
Amed S. F.	33	21	12
Ankara B.B. Fomget G.S.K.	87	50	37
Ataşehir Belediye Spor	31	13	18
Bitexen 1207 Antalyaspor K.F.K.	46	27	19
Bitexen Adana İdman Yurdu Spor	20	10	10
BJK Vodafone K.F.T.	45	28	17
Dudullu	70	41	29
Fatih Vatan Spor	64	36	28
FB A.Ş.	27	10	17
GS Petrol Ofisi K.F.T.	45	24	21
Hakkariğücü Spor	20	9	11
Kdz. Ereğli Belediye Spor	22	10	12
Wulfz Fatih Karagümrük	45	26	19
Kireçburnu	19	4	15
Konak Belediye Spor	79	44	35
Onvo Hatayspor	34	18	16
Trabzonspor A.Ş.	33	19	14
Total	829	454	375

*(Retrieved from www.tff.org and www.mackolik.com June 5, 2023)

As seen in Table 1, 19 teams and 829 football players from the women's football super league were examined. It was seen that the number of football players born in the first half of the election year outnumbered the players born in the second half of the year.

Table 2: 2022-2023 Season Turkish Women Football 1. League Teams and Number of Players

Team	Football Player	Born in First Half of the Year	Born in Last Half of the Year
Bağcılar Evren Spor	67	37	30
Beylerbeyi Spor A.Ş. P.Ç.S.K.	21	12	9
Birfen Koleji Hatay Defne	21	12	9
D. G. Gaziantep Asya Spor	24	12	12
Giresun Sanayispor	50	26	24
Horozkent S. K.	73	45	28
İlkadım Belediyesi Y.P.S.	67	42	25
Kocaeli Bayan F.K.	92	44	48
Sakarya Kadın F.K.	99	56	43
Soma Zafer Spor ve Gençlik	81	48	33
Şırnak Belediyesi Nuh Spor	26	17	9
Ünyegücü F.K.	27	18	9
Y. Kayseri Kadın F.K.	75	40	35
Total	723	409	314

*(Retrieved from www.tff.org and www.mackolik.com June 5, 2023)

As seen in Table 2, 13 teams and 723 football players from the women's football 1. league were examined. It was seen that the number of football players born in the first half of the election year outnumbered the players born in the second half of the year.

Table 3: 2022-2023 Season Turkish Women Football Super and 1. League Teams and Number of Players

Team	Football Player	Born in First Half of the Year	Born in Last Half of the Year
Women Super League	829	454	375
Women 1. League	723	409	314
Total	1552	863	689

As seen in Table 3, 1552 football players from the women's football süper and 1. Leagues were examined. It was seen that the number of football players born in the first half of the election year outnumbered the players born in the second half of the year.

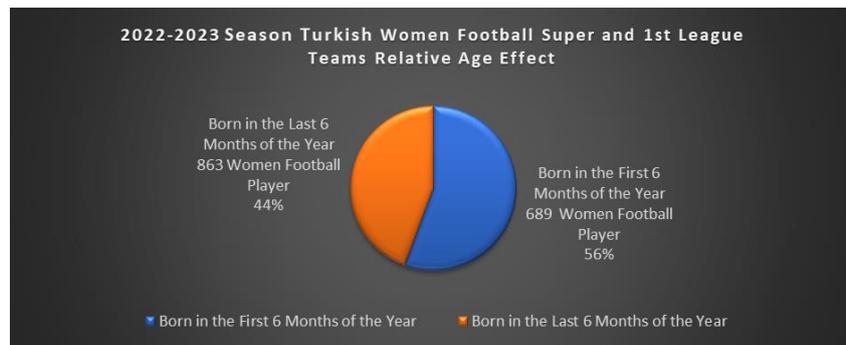


Figure 1: Relative Age Effect of 2022-2023 Season Turkish Women's Football Leagues

In Figure 1, it is seen that 863 female football players born in the first 6 months of the election year with a rate of 56% are outnumbered by 689 female football players born in the last 6 months of the year with a rate of 44%.

Table 4: 2022-2023 Season Turkish Women Football Super and 1. League Champion Teams and Number of Players

Team	Football Player	Born in First Half of the Year	Born in Last Half of the Year
Ankara B.B. Fomget G.S.K.	87	50	37
Beylerbeyi Spor A.Ş. P.Ç.S.K.	21	12	9
Total	108	62	46

As seen in Table 4, 108 football players in the squads of the Champion Teams in the women's football super and 1st leagues were examined. It is seen that the number of football players born in the first half of the election year is higher in both champion teams.

Table 5: 2022-2023 Season Turkey Women's Football Super and 1st League Relegated Teams and Number of Players

Team	Football Player	Born in First Half of the Year	Born in Last Half of the Year
Altay	21	12	9
Kireçburnu	19	4	15
Birfen Koleji Hatay Defne	21	12	9
Total	61	28	33

As seen in Table 5, 61 football players in the squads of the relegated teams in the women's football super and 1st leagues were examined. Contrary to the champion teams, it is seen that the number of football players born in the last half of the election year is higher on average in the relegated team rosters.

DISCUSSION

In this study, football players of different skill levels and chronological ages were considered. The aim of the study was to compare the birth date of female football players. Since physical superiority is highly correlated with performance and it is argued that maturity is the underlying reason for the presence of the relative age effect, it was considered that the relative age effect would be more pronounced in higher-level teams. It was recognized that it may be usual for the relative age effect to become less pronounced in senior football than in junior football, as maturity differences disappear once adulthood is reached. However, the result clearly supported the presence of a relative age effect in the adolescent female football player group. It was aimed to examine the relative age effect of all licensed female football players competing in the Turkish Women Super League and the 1st League in the 2022-2023 Season. Looking at table 1; For the women's football super league teams, a total of 19 teams and 829 football players were examined. It consisted of 454 female football players born in the first 6 months of the election year,

and 375 female football players born in the last 6 months of the year. It was observed that the number of female football players born in the first half of the election year outnumbered female football players born in the second half of the year. Looking at table 2; 13 teams and 723 female football players in the 1st League of women's football were examined. It has been determined that it consists of 409 female football players born in the first 6 months of the election year and 314 female football players born in the last 6 months of the year. It has been observed that the number of foreign female football players born in the first half of the election year is higher than the number of foreign female football players born in the second half of the year. Looking at table 3, a total of 32 teams and 1552 female football players from the women's football super league and the 1st league were examined. In total, it was determined that there were 863 female football players born in the first 6 months of the election year and 689 female football players born in the last 6 months of the year. It was observed that the number of female football players born in

the first half of the election year outnumbered female football players born in the second half of the year. The results of our study and the results of the studies in the literature show similarities and differences.

There are studies that do not overlap with the results of our study. Simon et al. (2022), investigated the relative age effect of all licensed and actively playing Luxembourg young football players, including all players of the national youth teams (396 girls and 10,981 boys) competing in the 2018/2019 season. At the end of the research; They observed that there is no relative age effect in all age groups (except U7), but it has high effect sizes in senior and national teams. Andrew et al. (2022), investigated the effect of relative age on 6546 male and female football players who participated in the last European Championship qualifications. In conclusion; They found that while there was a relative age effect among male players, there was no relative age effect among female football players. Goldschmied (2011), investigated the effect of relative age on female athletes. Athletes in football, basketball and handball sports branches consisting of 444 people in total participated in the study. As a result of the study; It was determined that there was no relative age effect in any branch. Baumler (1996), based on a study of German professional adult football players, declared that the relative age effect in senior football decreases with increasing age. Although relatively younger players were underrepresented in absolute numbers at the senior level, they had an equal chance of being drafted or playing as players born in the first half of an election year (Vaeyens et al., 2005). These studies are partially similar to the results of our research. Partially similarly, in our study, the women's Football Super League and the 1st League Champion teams had more athletes born in the first 6 months of the election year, but the average of the athletes born in the last 6 months of the year was higher in the relegated teams in the Women's Football Super League and 1st League.

There are also studies that show similarities with the general results of our study. It has been noted that players born in the first quarter of the year are more developed in terms of height, mass and strength in all young male and female participant groups of the French Basketball Federation (Delorme and Raspud, 2009). These advantages are reflected in their potential and contribute to their recognition by sports professionals (Helsen et al., 2005). A study by Per´rez Jimenez and Pain (2008) analyzed the prevalence of the relative age effect among Hispanic youth and senior clubs and national teams and reported once again a tendency to underrepresent players born in the last months of the season. Ari et al. (2022), examined the relative age effect of football players in the Turkish Women's 1st Football League and their place in success. In the study, they reached 2684 female football players. As a result of the study; They found that there is a relative age effect in Turkish women's football, but it is not an important factor for success. Barnsley et al. (1992) observed that in the 1990 Football World Cup, 55% of players were born in the first half of the year. In international U-17 and U-20 competitions, this figure increased to 79% on average. Sedano et al. (2015), conducted a study investigating the effect of relative age on 4035 people playing in Spanish Women's football leagues. In conclusion; They found that almost all football player groups were distributed in the first

quarter of the year. Bennett et al. (2023), examined the prevalence of relative age effects and the impact of talent pool size on Australian men's and women's youth football. Overall, they found that the size of the talent pool was associated with being more likely to choose a player born in the first half of the year from the second half. They also stated that the relative age effect of men is greater than that of women. Helsen et al. (2012) compared the relative age effect of professional football players over a 10-year period (2000-2001 and 2010-2011 competitive seasons) in 10 European countries. Overall, the results showed no change in relative age effect over the past 10 years in professional football. These studies support the results of our research. The athletes we examined in the study are affected by the relative age effect. The results obtained from previous studies and the results of our research do not show parallelism.

Suggestions:

- Comparisons can be made between the women's football leagues in Turkey and the women's leagues of other countries.
- The relative age effect of female football players working in Turkey A national, and youth national teams can be examined.
- Coaches need to develop realistic expectations regarding the physical abilities of young players. These expectations should be based on ability-related characteristics, not chronological age.
- Coaches should categorize players by level of expertise so that all players have the same opportunities.

Research Ethics: The ethics committee approval of the research was obtained with the decision numbered E-49846378-050.01.04-2300010576 at the meeting numbered 2023/09 of the Academic Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Istanbul Topkapi University.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

Author Contribution Rate: In this study, the contribution rate of the first author is 60%, while the contribution rate of the second author is 20% and the third author is 20%.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Çalışmanın Amacı: Günümüzde FIFA ve UEFA kuruluşlarının kadın futboluna önem vermesi, kadın futboluna yönelik akademik çalışmaların az olması ve bu alandaki boşluğu doldurabilme arzusu, çalışmanın önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, bu çalışma ile kadın futbolcuların takımların kadrolarına seçilebilme ölçütlerinden olan yaş bilgileri hakkında kulüplere ve milli takımlara faydalar sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu çalışmada 2022-2023 futbol sezonunda Türkiye Kadınlar Süper Ligi ve Kadınlar 1. Ligi'nde forma giyen kadın futbolcular üzerinde göreceli yaş etkisinin olup olmadığını ortaya çıkarmak amaçlanmıştır.

Araştırma Soruları: Nitel araştırmaya yön veren sorular aşağıdadır;

- 2022-2023 futbol sezonunda Türkiye Kadınlar Süper Ligi takım kadrolarında yılın ilk altı ayında doğan sporcu sporcu sayısı ne kadardır?
- 2022-2023 futbol sezonunda Türkiye Kadınlar Süper Ligi takım kadrolarında yılın son altı ayında doğan sporcu sporcu sayısı ne kadardır?
- 2022-2023 futbol sezonunda Türkiye Kadınlar 1. Ligi takım kadrolarında yılın ilk altı ayında doğan sporcu sporcu sayısı ne kadardır?
- 2022-2023 futbol sezonunda Türkiye Kadınlar 1. Ligi takım kadrolarında yılın son altı ayında doğan sporcu sporcu sayısı ne kadardır?
- 2022-2023 futbol sezonunda Türkiye Kadınlar Süper Lig ve 1. Ligi takım kadrolarında toplam sporcu sayısına göre yılın ilk altı ayında ve son altı ayında doğan sporcuların oranı ne kadardır?
- 2022-2023 futbol sezonunda Türkiye Kadınlar Süper Lig ve 1. Ligi Şampiyonu takım kadrolarında toplam sporcu sayısına göre yılın ilk altı ayında ve son altı ayında doğan sporcuların sayısı ne kadardır?
- 2022-2023 futbol sezonunda Türkiye Kadınlar Süper Lig ve 1. Ligi küme düşen takım kadrolarında toplam sporcu sayısına göre yılın ilk altı ayında ve son altı ayında doğan sporcuların sayısı ne kadardır?
- 2022-2023 futbol sezonunda Türkiye Kadınlar Süper Lig ve 1. Ligi şampiyon ve küme düşen takım kadrolarında yılın ilk altı ayında ve son altı ayında doğan sporcuların karşılaştırma sonucu nedir?

Literatür Araştırması: Bennet ve ark. (2023), göreceli yaş etkilerinin yaygınlığını ve yetenek havuzu boyutunun Avustralya erkek ve kadın genç futbolu üzerindeki etkisini inceledi. Genel olarak, yetenek havuzunun boyutunun, yılın ilk yarısında doğan bir oyuncuyu ikinci yarısından seçme olasılığıyla ilişkili olduğunu buldular. Ayrıca erkeklerin göreceli yaş etkisinin kadınlardan daha fazla olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Simon ve ark. (2022), 2018/2019 sezonunda yarışan ulusal altyapı takımlarının tüm oyuncularını (396 kız ve 10.981 erkek) dahil olmak üzere tüm lisanslı ve aktif olarak oynayan Lüksemburglu genç futbolcuların göreceli yaş etkisini araştırdı. Araştırma sonunda; Tüm yaş gruplarında (U7 hariç) göreceli yaş etkisinin olmadığını, ancak üst düzey ve milli takımlarda yüksek etki boyutlarına sahip olduğunu gözlemlədiler. Andrew ve ark. (2022), son Avrupa Şampiyonası elemelerine katılan 6546 erkek ve kadın futbolcu üzerinde göreceli yaşın etkisini araştırmıştır. Sonuç olarak; Erkek oyuncular arasında göreceli bir yaş etkisi varken, kadın futbolcular arasında göreceli bir yaş etkisi olmadığını bulmuşlardır. Ari ve ark. (2022), Türkiye Kadınlar 1. Futbol Ligi'nde yer alan futbolcuların göreceli yaş etkisini ve başarıdaki yerlerini inceledi. Çalışmada 2684 kadın futbolcuya ulaşıldı. Çalışma

sonucunda; Türk kadın futbolunda göreceli bir yaş etkisi olduğunu ancak bunun başarı için önemli bir faktör olmadığını bulmuşlardır. Göreceli yaş etkisi, futbolda ve çeşitli spor dallarında uluslararası düzeyde kapsamlı bir şekilde araştırılmıştır fakat çoğu çalışma ağırlıklı olarak profesyonel elit erkek oyunculara odaklanmıştır. Günümüzde FIFA ve UEFA kuruluşlarının kadın futboluna önem vermesi, kadın futboluna yönelik akademik çalışmaların az olması ve bu alandaki boşluğu doldurabilme arzusu, çalışmamızın önemini ortaya koymaktadır.

Yöntem: Araştırmada "Temel Nitel Araştırma Modeli" kullanılmıştır. Temel nitel araştırma; dilbilim, felsefe, antropoloji, sosyoloji gibi farklı disiplinlerle sağlık, spor, eğitim vb. birçok alanda uygulanabilen bir yöntem türüdür. Bu araştırmada 'Gömülü Teori' olarak bilinen teori ile veri analizine temel oluşturmak amaçlanmıştır. Bu tür analiz Glaser ve Strauss (2006) tarafından geliştirilmiştir. Gömülü teori, nitel araştırmaların nicel standartlara göre değerlendirilmesini sağlayarak bilim dünyasına nitel bir yaklaşım için sunulan bir bahaneyeye dönüşmüştür (Atkinson, 1997).

Sonuç ve Değerlendirme: Bu çalışmada, farklı beceri seviyelerine ve kronolojik yaştaki kadın futbolcular dikkate alındı. Çalışmanın amacı kadın futbolcuların doğum tarihini karşılaştırmaktı. Fiziksel üstünlük, performansla yüksek oranda ilişkili olduğundan ve göreceli yaş etkisinin varlığının altında yatan nedenin olgunluk olduğu savunulduğundan, göreceli yaş etkisinin daha üst düzey takımlarda daha belirgin olacağı göz önünde bulunduruldu. Yetişkinliğe erişildiğinde olgunluk farklılıkları ortadan kalktığından, göreceli yaş etkisinin üst düzey futbolda genç futbol kategorisine nazaran daha az belirgin hale gelmesinin olağan bir durum olabileceği kabul edildi. Fakat sonuç, ergen kadın futbolcu grubunda belirgin biçimde göreceli yaş etkisinin varlığını destekler nitelikte oldu. 2022/2023 futbol sezonu için Türkiye Kadınlar Futbol Liginde 32 takım ve 1552 kadın futbolcu doğum tarihlerine göre inceleyerek, 863 kadın futbolcunun yılın ilk yarısında, 689 kadın futbolcunun ise yılın ikinci yarısında doğumlu olduğu görüldü. Ayrıca Kadın Futbol Süper Lig ve 1. Lig Şampiyonu takımlarda seçim yılının ilk 6 ayı içerisinde doğan sporcuların fazla olduğu, fakat Kadın Futbol Süper Lig ve 1. Lig'de küme düşen takımlarda yılın son 6 ayı içerisinde doğan sporcuların ortalamasının daha yüksek olduğu görüldü. İlgili sezon içerisinde futbolcuların genel değerlendirmesine göre, 2022/2023 sezonu için incelenen Türkiye Kadın Futbol Süper Lig ve 1. Lig sporcularında göreceli yaş etkisi durumundan etkilenme durumunun var olduğu sonucuna ulaşıldı.