

COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP AND SPORT PASSION IN INDIVIDUAL SPORTS**Sevim GULLU¹ Burcak KESKIN² Osman ATES¹ Ecem HANBAY¹**¹Faculty of Sport Sciences, Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa, Istanbul, Turkey²Faculty of Sport Sciences, Yalova University, Yalova, Turkey

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the relationship coach-athlete relationship and sport passions in individual sports. In this context, scales were applied to athletes in Table Tennis, Gymnastic, Karate, and Taekwondo. Participants (n=278) were asked questions with demographic information to obtain personal information. Additionally, "Coach-Athlete Relationship Scale" developed by Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004) and adapted to Turkish by Altıntaş et al. (2012) that has "closeness", "commitment", "complementarity" sub-dimensions. And "Passion Scale" developed by Vallerand et al. (2003) and adapted to Turkish by Kelecek & Aşçı (2013) that has "harmonious passion" and "obsessive passion" was applied. Reliability analysis was conducted for this study. Scale items were measured on a seven-point Likert type scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. To evaluate obtained data, SPSS 20 package program was used. To determine distribution of personal information of participants, percentage (%) and frequency (f) methods among descriptive statistical methods were adopted. To determine whether data had normal distribution, Kolmogorov Smirnov normality test was applied and then it was determined that data complied with parametric test conditions, t-test was applied for two-factor variables and ANOVA test was applied for variables with three or more factors to determine significant differences. Significance level was accepted as $p < 0.05$. Additionally, to prove statistically significant relationship between sub-dimensions, correlation analysis was conducted. According to findings, national athlete participated more than non-national athlete for obsessive passion. When averages were considered, elementary school graduates had participated closeness and commitment sub-dimensions more than undergraduate and master's. Also, less seniority has higher points for closeness, commitment and complimentary sub-dimensions. There was significant and positive relationship between Coach-Athlete and Sport Passion sub-dimensions ($p < 0.05$).

Key words: *Coach, Athlete, Coach-Athlete Relationship, Coach Communication, Leadership, Sport Passion, Table Tennis, Gymnastic, Taekwondo, Karate*

Introduction

An athlete works intensely at different times of day to achieve success (Bozyigit & Durmus, 2018). On the other hand, coach has an important mission in live (Unutmaz & Gencer, 2017) and sportive success of athlete (Gorgulu, 2019; Kaur and Singh, 2019). Coaches have the guider effect to guide motivation (Vallerand et al., 2003), performance (Altıntaş & Bayar, 2016), success, harmonious team work, communication with competitors. Their behaviours, expressions, and messages are important (Gullu & Sahin, 2016). In sports field, role of coach has become corporate and there is a coach behind every athlete that support these athletes to reach their purposes and passions (Voss, 2000). For technical, tactical, and strategic guidance of a coach to achieve success, the relationship with athlete is important (Jowett and Cockerill, 2002:16). On the other hand, as it is impossible for athlete to show high-level performance without coach, it is impossible for a coach to become successful without

commitment, talent, and will of athlete (Hampson and Jowett, 2014). Also coaches's behaviours (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher 2007) and communication (Nicholls et al., 2017) are important for athlete's success (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher 2007).

The relationship between athletes and coaches a concept used by athlete and coach to explaining how they impact their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours (Avcı et al., 2018). Positive relationship contributes to social, individual, and physical development of athletes (Bezci, 2016). On the other hand, negative relationship causes stress and burnout (Yıldız, 2015), and may even cause some athletes to drop sports (Avcı et al., 2018).

Coach-athlete relationship is generally the most important and effective relationship for success of young people (Fry & Newton, 2003). As competitiveness and sport success of athletes increase, time they spend with their coaches

increases. Although the coach-athlete relationship changed based on demographic variables such as age and gender, coach has an important power on athlete. Coach can even intervene with eating and sleeping habit of athlete. The coach can act as a dietitian, counsellor, and health expert. It is important to note that the tempo work of some coaches are linked with success of athlete they are working with (Ashley & Gretchen, 2009).

The relationship between the coach and athlete is described based on the sub-dimensions of commitment, complementarity and closeness (Jowett, S. & Cockeril, 2002). Closeness reflects the emotional tone of the relationship (Jowett, 2008). It is used to express the degree of appreciation, trust, respect and appreciation of between the coach and the athlete. Commitment expresses the coaches' and athletes' intention and desire to continue their relationship without any expectations. Complementarity, on the other hand, can be defined as the cooperation between the coach and the athlete. They both want to win, they adopt a kind and friendly attitude each other towards each other and take responsibilities, which indicate the complementarity dimension of the behavioral features (Adie & Jowett, 2010). (cited in Gullu, 2008)

Behaviour of individuals in sports environment, their emotional status, and participation to this environment or reasons to stay in this environment as well as how much did these reasons effected individuals started to analyse passion concept (Kelecek & Aşçı, 2013). Passion is defined as strong

tendency of an individual towards an activity which that individual liked and/or loved, cared for, and spend time and energy. Passion has an important place for individual to participate in an activity, continue this participation as well as their daily lives. Individuals do the activities they like and internalising these activities with their identities turned into passion (Vallerand, 2008; Vallerand & Houliort, 2003).

Vallerand et al. (2003) developed a two dimensional passion model consisting of harmonious passion and obsessive passion sub-dimensions. Harmonious passion is defined as selection of an activity freely and voluntarily without any external effect and internalising this activity by itself. Obsessive passion on the other hand is defined as internalising activity participation with individual or inter individual pressure or phenomenon (social acceptance, self-respect). Individual feels forced to participate in the activity and internalises with individual or inter individual control. In addition to phenomenon like social acceptance, self-respect added to activity, it has negative emotions such as guilt, sadness, and embarrassment due to non-participation. On contrary to harmonious passion, individuals with high obsessive passion scores are stricter and insistent. These individuals show behaviours such as anger, anxiety, and lack of concentration (Paradis et al., 2013; Kelecek & Aşçı, 2013).

The research aims to evaluate relationship between the coach-athlete relationship and sport passion in individual sports. In this context, scales were applied to sports players in Table Tennis, Gymnastic, Karate, and Taekwondo.

Methods

Participants:

This study was conducted on 278 athletes in Table Tennis, Gymnastic, Karate, and Taekwondo branches. Additionally, participants were informed about the purpose and content of the study and after this process, data were collected.

Demographic properties of athlete participants were presented in Table 1.

		Count	Column N %
Sport Branch	Table Tennis	128	46.0
	Taekwondo	45	16.2
	Gymnastic	94	33.8
	Karate	11	4.0
	Total	278	100.0
National Athlete Status	Yes	105	37.8
	No	173	62.2
	Total	278	100.0
Gender	Female	147	52.9
	Male	131	47.1
	Total	278	100.0
Education Level	Elementary	118	42.4
	High school	90	32.4

	Undergraduate and Master's	70	25.2
	Total	278	100.0
Duration in This Sport	1-4 years	123	44.2
	5-8 years	84	30.2
	9-12 years	32	11.5
	13-16 years	14	5.0
	Above 17 years	25	9.0
	Total	278	100.0
Time in Current Club	1-4 years	182	65.5
	5-8 years	60	21.6
	9-12 years	24	8.6
	Above 13 years	12	4.3
	Total	278	100.0
Time with Current Coach	0-4 years	184	66.2
	5-8 years	62	22.3
	Above 9 years	32	11.5
	Total	278	100.0

Data Collection Tools:

Participants were asked questions with demographic information to obtain personal information. Additionally, 11 question "Coach-Athlete Relationship Scale" developed by Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004) and adapted to Turkish by Altıntaş et al. (2012) that has "closeness", "commitment", "complementarity" sub-dimensions and 12 question "Athlete Passion" developed by Vallerand et al. (2003) and adapted to Turkish by Keleşek & Aşçı (2013) that has "harmonious passion" and "obsessive passion" was applied. Reliability analysis was conducted for this study. Survey questions in this study were prepared in 7-point Likert type. 1 was completely disagree while 7 was completely agree.

Research Model:

In this study, cross-sectional survey method among general survey models was adopted.

Data Analysis

To evaluate obtained data, SPSS 20 package program was used. To determine distribution of personal information of participants, percentage (%) and frequency (f) methods among descriptive statistical methods were adopted. To determine whether data had normal distribution, Kolmogorov Smirnov normality test was applied and after it was determined that data complied with parametric test conditions, t-test was applied for two-factor variables and ANOVA test was applied for variables with three or more factors to determine significant differences. Significance level was accepted as $p < 0.05$. Additionally, to prove statistically significant relationship between sub-dimensions, correlation analysis was conducted

Results

Scale Score Values were presented in Table 2. According to Table 2 it can be seen that Cronbach Alpha coefficients of the sub-dimensions were high. This indicates that these scales had high reliability. Participation to Coach-Athlete Sub-Dimensions was high. Also, participation to harmonious passion was high, but obsessive passion was lower.

Table 2. Scale Score Values

	n of items	Mean	Std. D.	Cronbach Alpha	Cronbach Alpha for original scales
Closeness Sub-Dimensions	4	6,268	1,350	,939	,900
Commitment Sub-Dimension	3	5,724	1,550	,875	,900
Complementary Sub-Dimension	4	5,826	1,270	,795	,820
Harmonious Passion Sub-Dimension	6	5,856	1,244	,789	,830
Obsessive Passion Sub-Dimension	6	4,604	1,409	,886	,780

It was observed that lowest participation in Coach-Athlete Relationship Scale was "I am devoted to my coach" ($x=5,49$) while highest participation was "I respect my coach" ($x=6,52$) statement. In Sport Passion Scale

lowest participation was "This activity are so exciting that sometimes I lose my control on it" ($\bar{x}= 4,65$) while highest participation was "This activity enables me to have different experiences" ($\bar{x}=6,29$) statement.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test (KMO) result of factor analysis for Coach-Athlete Relationship scale was 0.942. This values showed that sample size was sufficient for factor analysis. Barlet Sphericity test results were significant ($\chi^2:3127.741$; $p<0.05$). Also Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test result was 0.888 for Sport Passion Scale and Barlet Sphericity test results were ($\chi^2:1777.189$; $p<0.05$). These results were important as they showed that analysis can be made.

Table 3. Coach-Athlete Relationship Sub-Dimensions ANOVA Test Results for Seniority

Seniority		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p	Variance Group
Closeness	1-4 years	123	6,441	1,258	7,258	0,000	1>4 2>4
	5-8 years	84	6,452	1,074			
	9-12 years	32	5,813	1,709			
	13-16 years	14	4,679	1,616			
	Over 17 years	25	6,270	1,342			
	Total	278	6,268	1,350			
Commitment	1-4 years	123	5,837	1,471	3,952	0,004	1>4 2>4
	5-8 years	84	5,933	1,377			
	9-12 years	32	5,448	1,789			
	13-16 years	14	4,310	1,666			
	Over 17 years	25	5,613	1,745			
	Total	278	5,724	1,550			
Complementary	1-4 years	123	5,900	1,157	4,586	0,001	1>4 2>4
	5-8 years	84	6,015	1,096			
	9-12 years	32	5,477	1,578			
	13-16 years	14	4,625	1,580			
	Over 17 years	25	5,950	1,392			
	Total	278	5,826	1,271			

Table 4. Sport Passion Sub-Dimensions t-test Results for Being National Status

National Athlete Status		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
Harmonious Passion	Yes	105	5,936	1,292	1,121	0,263
	No	173	5,790	1,213		
Obsessive Passion	Yes	105	4,825	1,405	2,050	0,041
	No	173	4.470	1,398		

Table 5. Coach-Athlete Relationship Sub Dimensions ANOVA Test Results for Education Level

Education Level		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p	Variance Group
Closeness	Elementary	118	6,447	1,330	3,776	0,024	1>3
	Highschool	90	6,319	1,287			
	Undergraduate and Master's	70	5,900	1,407			
	Total	278	6,268	1.350			
Commitment	Elementary	118	5,963	1,477	4,988	0,007	1>3
	Highschool	90	5,785	1,557			
	Undergraduate and Master's	70	5,242	1,574			
	Total	278	5,724	1,550			

	Elementary	118	5,872	1,218		
	Highschool	90	5,894	1,245		
Complementary	Undergraduate and Master's	70	5,660	1,389	,802	0,450
	Total	278	5,826	1,270		

Table 6. Correlation Table

			1	2	3	4	5
1- Closeness Dimension	Sub-	r	1	,830**	,847**	,641**	,342**
		p		,000	,000	,000	,000
		N		278	278	278	278
2- Commitment Dimension	Sub-	r		1	,808**	,592**	,354**
		p			,000	,000	,000
		N			278	278	278
3- Complementary Sub-Dimension		r			1	,684**	,450**
		p				,000	,000
		N				278	278
4- Harmanious Passion Sub-Dimension		r				1	,628**
		p					,000
		N					278
5- Obsessive Passion Sub-Dimension		r					1
		p					
		N					

** . Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion and Conclusion

Results of this study showed that there was high level of coach-athlete relationship. The coach-athlete relationship is important in individual sports. The leadership and orientation of the coach is very important for the athletes who are in direct contact with their coach. Rhind, Jowett & Yang (2012) compared individual and team sport coach-athlete relationship and found that individual athletes cared more to their relationships with coaches where team sport players had closer scores. Since individual athletes spend more time with their coaches, interaction and relationship are more important. Schliesman (1987), Weiss & Friedrichs (1986) showed that teams that receive social support from their coaches were more successful. Some studies on team sports (Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984) showed that on contrary to individual sports, teams athletes preferred more autocratic coaches (Baker et al., 2003). Fry and Gano-Overway (2010) stated that coaches have an effect to develop social and psychological skills of athletes.

The highest participation was in closeness, then in complementary and then in the commitment sub-dimensions. It is common for individual athletes to care more about the proximity of their coach. Additionally, it was found that there is a strong relationship between coach-athlete relationship and sport passion of athletes. This can be interpreted as

the coach-athlete relationship contributes to the social harmony of athletes. Obsessive passion is also associated with the sub-dimensions of coach-athlete relationship. Obsessive passion is a sub-dimension that the athlete feels internally. And it can be said that the coach athlete relationship is less associated with the obsessive sub-dimension of obsession. Clubs should take necessary precautions, and employ coaches who can work harmoniously with athlete, understand them, and form a correct and good communication. These aspects of current coaches should be improved with related work. The result is similar with an other research about coach-athlete relationship and sport passion for handball players (Güllü,2018). According to the research there is a positive relationship between the coach-athlete and the passion for sports.

Being a national athlete had statistical difference on obsessive passion sub-dimension. This difference was in favour of athlete with national background. This results of this study is striking. Since national athletes have an objective and focus on success rather than non-national athletes, they are more passionate about their sports. An athlete that knows peak point of success tries harder to stay there and uses internal and external resources at maximum level. Because athletes that represent their countries are more passionate about their sports not to be embarrassed. Such success creates stress

and anxiety on national athlete and cause them to feel angry and guilty in case of declined success. In this study, although there was no significant difference between being national athlete and coach-athlete relationship, according to a study conducted on 12 athletes with Olympic medal (Jowett and Cockerill, 2003:327) development of athletes is important for coach-athlete relationship. This occurs with mutual respect, trust, interest, support, open communication, and knowledge sharing. It was recommended that since participants were Olympic athletes and young people took them as examples, their relationship with coaches should be a model.

It was observed that there were significant differences between coach-athlete relationship depending on education level. When averages were considered, elementary school graduates had participated coach-athlete relationship scale more than undergraduate and master's. This results of this study is normal. Athletes with higher education may have weaker relationship with their coaches than athlete with low education level as they believe their knowledge would bring them advantage. Especially, athletes that have a coach who has owner education level refuses to form a relationship and communication. Elementary school graduate athletes had more relationship tendency and focus and were more committed to their coaches.

Also, higher level in coach-athlete relationship scale for lower seniority is normal and compliant with literature. Since athletes with lower seniority are inexperienced, they need guidance from their coaches. As they lack knowledge and experience in creating training program, and develop tactics, they tend to develop more intense relationship with their coaches.

It was found that there was no significant relationship between gender and the coach-athlete relationship scale and sport passion scale. When gender differences were considered, it is surprising

that there was no difference in favour of female athletes. Women structurally have more intense connectiveness and trust needs than men. However, since most of the participants were 15 years old or below, it is believed that such result was obtained. At these ages, regardless of the gender, there may be relationship tendencies. Gender differences become clear in following years. This is our comment and there are contrary beliefs in the literature. In a study conducted in Russia on university athletes and analysed these athletes perceived coach behaviours showed that male athletes perceived their coaches more democratic than female athletes. Additionally, compared to male athletes, their coach support them and give positive feedback. Female athletes defined their coaches as autocratic (Hagan et al, 2017:72).

The coach-athlete relationship showed no difference for sport branch, time with current coach, and time in current club. Similar results for Table Tennis, Gymnastic, Karate, and Taekwondo for coach-athlete relationship can be linked with the fact that these sports are under individual sports. Since our study group was generally young, this results could be explained by these individuals have no experience in other clubs or with other coaches. For harmonious passion and obsessive passion sub-dimensions national status, gender, marital status, sport branch, age, time with current coach, time in current club showed no difference. It is believed that higher number of young participants in study group effected this result. Lack of passion in a sport by individuals is linked with late age to start sports in our country (Turkey). Generally, since athletes start sport with guidance of their families, they find what they want, and how they will shape their life in older ages.

It is suggested that the research should be investigated by adding different variables to the team and individual athletes in different branches.

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