

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



# The Examination of the Coach-Athlete Relationship and Sports Participation Motivations of Individual and Team Athletes

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Submitted January 28, 2024; Accepted in final form March 26, 2024.

## ABSTRACT

**Background.** In individual and team sports, various internal and external factors influence individuals to engage in these sports. These factors also play a role in the coach-athlete relationship. **Objectives.** This study investigates the coach-athlete relationship and the factors influencing participation motivation for individual and team athletes. **Methods.** The study included 100 male and female amateur athletes between the ages of 14 and 18. Participants were administered a personal information form (gender, age, education level, sports discipline, years of participation), a coach-athlete relationship scale, and a participation motivation scale. SPSS 25.00 software package was used for data analysis. **Results.** The analysis revealed a significant relationship in favor of individual sports in the coach-athlete relationship's common goal ( $p=0.010$ ) and trust sub-dimensions ( $p=0.28$ ), while a significant relationship in favor of team sports was found in the friendship sub-dimension of participation motivation ( $p=0.14$ ). **Conclusion.** As a result, it is believed that the factors influencing individuals' participation in sports and the communication established by the coach with the athletes will play an essential role in both participation motivation and the athletes' success.

**KEYWORDS:** *Individual Athletes, Team Athletes, Motivation, Coach-Athlete Relationship.*

## INTRODUCTION

Many factors influence participation, performance, and continuity in sports environments. These factors require various motivational tools, and motivation is the leading factor among them. Güney (2000) Motivation refers to the factors that direct individuals towards certain behaviors in the face of certain situations (1). Tiryaki (2000) defines motivation as the enthusiasm or desire that triggers and directs behaviors (2). Koçel (2003) In sports, motivation is a crucial issue for athletes. This is because the success achieved by athletes holds significance for the audience. Without motivation, success in sports cannot be realized. As performance and motivation are interconnected factors, an athlete without motivation should not be expected to be successful (3). Some studies have investigated the effect of the

athlete's psychological state on performance and physiological characteristics (4, 5). Psychophysiology in sports examines the complex relationship between an athlete's psychological state and physiological responses. This field has evolved significantly by integrating with sports science to improve our understanding of athletic performance (5). Türkmen (2005) Motivations are divided into intrinsic and extrinsic types (6). Selçuk (1996) Factors outside an individual's control are considered extrinsic motivation, while factors related to needs inherent within an individual are considered intrinsic motivation (7). Doğan (2005) In sports, high motivation is critical for success. If the motivating force is low, a negative outcome is inevitable. Athletes with high intrinsic motivation work eagerly and persistently toward their goals;

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thus, they do not require particular motivation. They can control their performance (8). Konter (1995) However, in extrinsic motivation, coaches and spectators can be influential, as can tangible rewards such as trophies, money, medals, etc., and intangible rewards such as recognition and praise (9). In this context, it is believed that individuals participate in sports for specific reasons, and these reasons are related to either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation (10).

Play, performance, and health categories can be important for participants in pursuing sports. Additionally, it is observed that physiological and genetic factors can also be influential in participation in sports (11). Various factors contribute to increasing children's and young people's interest in sports and motivating their participation (12). Research generally highlights that there are several factors in sports participation. These include entertainment, fitness, skill development, success, status, team camaraderie, energy release, and situational motivators (influenced by families, coaches, and beneficial organizations) (13-15).

Among these, when we look at the relationship with the coach, the coach is an important role model for the athlete and an effective trigger in his development. The relationship and communication between the coach and the athlete contribute to their personal development and play a crucial role in enhancing their achievements. Since the attitudes and behaviors acquired particularly at a young age tend to manifest as habits in the athlete in the following years, both the coach and their coaching style are highly important from the early years of starting sports (16). Athletes who establish a good relationship with their coach are likely to exhibit more positive attitudes and behaviors (17). Communication with coaches is a process that affects the pleasure athletes receive during sports, their self-perception, and the increase in their performance levels (18). It is also known that the relationship established between the coach and the athlete leads to improved performance in competitive sports. Through sports, both the athlete and the coach show mutual commitment. From the athlete's perspective, this commitment allows benefiting from the coach's vast knowledge and experience, while from the coach's perspective, it triggers the desire and goal to increase success by seeing the reflection of their knowledge and skills on the athlete. Therefore, the athlete and the coach can develop a professional relationship, and they

may need to spend time together and cooperate to increase performance and success (19). Altıntaş et al. (2012) In this regard, environments where positive communication is experienced and established increase athlete motivation and satisfaction while creating a suitable space for athletes to develop their skills (20).

Communication, which holds a significant place in human life, is also crucial in the sports environment, especially between athletes and coaches, regarding the athletes' psychosocial and physical development (21). The coach is one of the most influential figures in the professional life of both amateur and professional athletes (22). Coaches serve as guides not only for transferring their fund of knowledge to athletes but also for communication with both their team and rival team players (23). Positive communication in the environment contributes to the coach-athlete relationship, enhances athletes' motivation and satisfaction, and creates a suitable atmosphere for their skill development. In this context, the coach's attitude can be crucial in determining the enjoyment, self-esteem, and performance that athletes experience during sports (18).

In a study conducted by Yılmaz et al. (2009), they found a significant difference between the levels of communication skills of athletes playing individual and team sports with their coaches (24). The results of this study led to the conclusion that the importance of communication between athlete-athlete and athlete-coach should be taken into consideration, and as a result, they stated that there would be a difference in the communication skill levels of coaches in team sports compared to coaches in individual sports.

Today, identifying the reasons for the growing interest in sports and individuals' inclination towards various branches is crucial. Especially in the adolescent period, understanding the factors influencing young people's engagement in sporting activities enhances their success. It underscores the importance of effective communication between coaches and athletes to ensure that athletes have quality time and increase motivation for sports participation. This research examines the coach-athlete relationship and the motivation for sports participation among individual and team athletes.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Participants.** One hundred registered and volunteer athletes in the infrastructures of

Büyükkartepe Spor Kulübü, Kartepe Belediye Spor Kulübü, and Kocaeli Büyükşehir Belediye Kağıtspor Kulübü in Kocaeli participated in this research.

**Data Collection Tools.** Two different survey forms were prepared for data collection. Data were obtained through a personal information form and scales to determine the athletes' coach-athlete relationship and sports participation motivations. The "Coach-Athlete Relationship Scale" developed by Ekenci et al. (2019) and the "Motivation for Sports Participation" scale developed by Oyar et al. (2001) were applied face-to-face (25, 26). The first survey administered to participants included questions about demographic information (gender, age, education level, sports discipline, years of practicing sports). The second survey included

questions about the coach-athlete relationship and motivation for sports participation.

**Data Analysis.** The data obtained from the scales were analyzed using the SPSS 25.00 software package. Since the data did not show normal distribution, the Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric test, was applied for the independent comparison of the two groups.

## RESULTS

There is a significant relationship in favor of individual sports in the sub-dimensions of the coach-athlete relationship and common goal and sense of trust ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 1).

There is a significant relationship between the motivation to participate in sports and the friendship sub-dimension in favor of team sports ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 1. Statistical values related to the comparison of the sub-dimensions of the coach-athlete relationship in team and individual sports**

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	P
Collaboration	Individual sports	66	54.05	3567.00	-1.720	0.085
	Team sports	34	43.62	1483.00		
	Total	100				
Common_goal	Individual sports	66	55.84	3685.50	-2.585	0.010*
	Team sports	34	40.13	1364.50		
	Total	100				
Sense of trust	Individual sports	66	54.95	3627.00	-2.202	0.028*
	Team sports	34	41.85	1423.00		
	Total	100				

\*:  $p < 0.05$

## DISCUSSION

The relationship established between athletes and coaches in the sports environment is crucial for the athletes' psychosocial and physical development. In an environment where positive communication is maintained, the coach-athlete relationship leads to the athlete's motivation and increased satisfaction, creating a conducive environment for skill development. The relationship between the coach and athlete consists of three sub-dimensions: commitment, complementarity, and closeness (21, 27). Commitment represents the desire of the coach and athlete to continue their relationship (28, 29), complementarity expresses collaboration, the desire to win, approaches to each other, mutual responsibility, and behavioral characteristics between the coach and athlete (29). The

emotional aspect of the relationship, closeness, reflects the degree of liking, trust, respect, and appreciation that the coach and athlete show towards each other (16).

Our study found a positively significant relationship between the coach-athlete relationship in individual sports and the shared goals and sense of trust (Table 1).

In a study by Altıntaş et al. (2012), the relationship between coaches and athletes was investigated based on age groups (20). Despite differences in age groups, the study found that the scores obtained in the sub-dimensions of complementarity, commitment, and closeness were close in both team and individual sports. Another study by Abakay (2012) revealed that the level of communication significantly increased as the duration of working with the same coach increased (30).

**Table 2. Statistical values related to the comparison of sub-dimensions of team and individual athletes' motivation for participation in sports**

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	P
<b>Skill_development</b>	Individual sports	66	50.89	3359.00	-0.266	0.790
	Team sports	34	49.74	1691.00		
	Total	100				
<b>Team_spirit</b>	Individual sports	66	53.82	3552.00	-1.909	0.056
	Team sports	34	44.06	1498.00		
	Total	100				
<b>Entertainment</b>	Individual sports	66	50.30	3320.00	-0.099	0.921
	Team sports	34	50.88	1730.00		
	Total	100				
<b>Friendship</b>	Individual sports	66	45.60	3009.50	-2.453	0.014*
	Team sports	34	60.01	2040.50		
	Total	100				
<b>Success</b>	Individual sports	66	47.71	3149.00	-1.430	0.153
	Team sports	34	55.91	1901.00		
	Total	100				
<b>Energy_expenditure</b>	Individual sports	66	52.15	3442.00	-0.888	0.374
	Team sports	34	47.29	1608.00		
	Total	100				
<b>Competition</b>	Individual sports	66	49.51	3267.50	-0.579	0.563
	Team sports	34	52.43	1782.50		
	Total	100				
<b>Being physically active</b>	Individual sports	66	51.45	3395.50	-0.537	0.591
	Team sports	34	48.66	1654.50		
	Total	100				

\*:  $p < 0.05$ 

In a study conducted by Abakay and Kuru (2013), they found a significant difference in the communication between football players and their coaches based on the duration of their collaboration (31). They attributed this difference to the increased time individuals spent with each other, emphasizing that spending more time together allowed athletes to know their coaches and vice versa more closely and effectively.

In their study, Tolukan and Akyel (2019) observed that an increase in the relationship between football players and their coaches led to a continuous increase in sports-related self-confidence (32). They also identified a positive and significant relationship among the sub-dimensions of the coach-athlete relationship scale. In another study, Öztürk et al. (2016) did not find any significant differences in the level of sports confidence based on the working duration of judo athletes with their coaches (33).

In the study conducted by Rhind and Yang (2012), where they compared the coach-athlete relationship between individual and team athletes, they found that individual athletes placed more importance on the relationship with their coaches (34).

Research indicates that effective communication between coaches and athletes is crucial to understanding each other's thoughts and feelings (35). A positive relationship between coaches and athletes contributes to athletes' individual and social development (16). Konter (2004) states that the positive approach of the coach not only contributes to athletes valuing themselves and builds a sense of respect, value, dignity, and trust towards the coach. On the other hand, a negative approach increases athletes' fear of failure, diminishes their self-respect, and leads to a loss of trust (36).

Our study identified a positively significant relationship between the coach-athlete

relationship in individual sports and the shared goals and sense of trust. This may be attributed to coaches working with smaller groups of athletes in individual sports compared to coaches in team sports. This allows them to provide more personalized attention, closely monitor athletes, intervene when necessary, and have a greater chance for feedback during training sessions involving techniques and tactics. Consequently, there may be fewer conflicts between coaches and athletes in individual sports, creating a more favorable environment for achieving goals.

It is observed that every year, numerous individuals engage in sports. Studies on the motivation for sports participation indicate that people engage in sports to improve their skills, make new friendships, have fun, express themselves, or experience a sense of achievement.

Our study revealed a positive relationship between the motivation for sports participation and the friendship sub-dimension in team sports (Table 2).

In a study on reasons for engaging in physical activity, Hausenblas (2004) found that individuals primarily participate in physical activity to maintain good health, feel psychologically well, have fun, and meet new people (37). Another study by Oyar (2001) identified the top five reasons for sports participation in Turkey: enjoyment, acquiring new skills, feeling healthy, skill development, and achieving success in the chosen sport (26).

According to a study by Şirin (2008), the factors most influencing the motivation of students participating in sports were "team membership/spirit" and "skill development", while "fun and friendship" were identified as the least influential factors (38).

In a study by Aygün and Yetim (2015), the most significant reasons for athletes to participate in their respective sports were identified as aiming for continuity in the chosen discipline, teamwork, and skill development (39).

In a study conducted by Temel and Nas (2021), where they examined the motivations of high school students participating in certain sports in school sports, they found that the team spirit dimension of the sports participation motivation scale varied according to the sports they engaged in (40). In another study by Şirin (2008), it was found that individuals involved in team sports scored higher on the "competition and friendship" sub-dimension compared to those engaged in

individual sports (38). In our study, the positive significant relationship between the motivation for sports participation and the friendship sub-dimension in team sports aligns with the parallel findings in the literature. It is thought that this may be due to the intense sense of unity and togetherness in team sports, the opportunity to form new friendships, and the enjoyment of experiencing success and competition together.

Our limitations were that The number of subjects in our study was small; it could be increased. It would have been better if all the surveys were conducted face-to-face.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is evident today that sports are not merely comprised of physical elements; numerous internal and external factors influence individuals' participation in sports. Moreover, the relationship established with the coach in the environments where participation occurs significantly influences performance.

## APPLICABLE REMARKS

- Positive motivation and effective communication make individuals more successful in sports, enabling them to reach their goals and objectives more accurately.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Study concept and design: İrem Ekinçi, Serap Çolak. Acquisition of data: İrem Ekinçi. Analysis and interpretation of data: Serap Çolak. Drafting the manuscript: İrem Ekinçi, Fatih Tezel. Critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content: İrem Ekinçi. Statistical analysis: Serap Çolak. Administrative, technical, and material support: İrem Ekinçi, Fatih Tezel. Study supervision: Serap Çolak.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this research study.

## FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

This research received no external financial disclosure.

## FUNDING/SUPPORT

This research received no external funding.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The study obtained ethical approval from the Non-Invasive Clinical Research Ethics Committee



of Kocaeli University, decision number 2023/08, dated June 12, 2023. This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of the Helsinki Declaration. Before measurements, participants were provided with a detailed presentation about the study procedure, and informed consent forms were obtained from their parents.

## ROLE OF THE SPONSOR

This research received no external role of the sponsor.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USING

This research received no artificial intelligence (AI) use.

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