



# **An Analysis on the Amateur Athlete Opinions Towards Coach Behaviors**

Selcuk BUĞDAYCI<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Selçuk University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Konya, Turkey



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**Selçuk BUĞDAYCI<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Selçuk University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Konya, Turkey

Email ID: sbugdayci@gmail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

The main purpose of this study was to reveal how amateur athletes assess coach behavior, which is thought to contribute significantly to sportive performance and success. The research sample comprises individuals who are active individual sportsmen and team members in Konya for 2019. A total of 23 branches were included in the interviews. Different branches such as basketball, field hockey, football, handball, and volleyball from team sports, and athletics, badminton, cycling, wrestling, weightlifting, judo, table tennis, taekwondo, tennis, and swimming from individual sports. The research sample comprises randomly selected amateur athletes recruited on a voluntary basis. A total of 773 athletes (578 male, 195 female) were recruited. The average sample age was determined as  $16.83 \pm 2.59$  for males, and  $17.41 \pm 3.24$  for females. The study has a descriptive design. This study is a descriptive attempt to examine the amateur athlete views on the evaluation of coach behavior. The athletes were recruited voluntarily from the active athletes in Konya province in 2019. The data collection utilized in this study was developed by Cote et al. (1999) and adapted to Turkish by Yapar and İnce (2014) under the title "Coach Behavior Assessment Scale for Athletes." The t-test, analysis of variance, and correlation analysis were performed for the data analysis through the SPSS 20.0 program. It was determined that the amateur athletes evaluated the coach behaviors positively. Individual sports had higher positivity rates than team sports in the physical training and planning, technical skills, mental preparation, target setting, and competition strategy sub-dimensions. Moreover, females evaluated the coach behaviors more positively in the physical training and planning dimensions. It was found that the coach behavior assessments are more positive with higher age, less sports experience, higher planning, preparation, and strategies of the trainers to improve their competition and training skills as even some negative coach behaviors are assessed more positively with higher sportive experience.

**Keywords:** Amateur, Athlete, Coach, Behavior, Coach behavior,

### **INTRODUCTION**

No matter how talented and hardworking an athlete or a team is, success cannot be achieved if they are not properly directed and developed both technically and tactically. All athletes need a trainer for success. A coach is a sports person who combines the theoretical knowledge with experience, directs the athletes per their abilities, trains, prepares and leads them for competitions (Doğan, 2004).

A trainer's job is not just about training or teaching how the sport is done. They interpret the information received from sports scientists, physicians and psychologists and transfers them to the athlete after comparing them with one's own experiences. This is because the scientific data are theoretical information and are not suitable for practical application. These data should vary according to the personality and sportive characteristics of the athletes (Baser, 1986).

The most important condition for success, which is the main goal in performance sports is to establish a healthy coach-athlete interaction. The main field of work of the coach is the athlete or the team. These relationships can generally be considered as interactions with an individual or a group. Their difference from any human relationship is that its purpose, functioning, and structure are more specific (Çeyiz, 2007).

It is generally accepted that the leadership style of the coach plays an important role in the team success in the competitions (Amorose & Horn, 2011). The sports environment is generally expressed as a bundle of relationships between the coach, the athlete, and the training environment. Therefore, this complex of relationships, which has a social and dynamic structure, is complicated and requires a special effort to understand (Mallet 2007). The coaches are generally evaluated on the basis of outputs such as the number of competition won, medals, players sent to the top leagues or national teams in this complex structure. It is stated that many national or top-level coaches find financial support from various sources thanks to their

achievements, or their contracts are terminated according to these qualities (Yapar and İnce 2014). However, it is stated that determining the quality of the coach solely on the basis of success or failure is not an effective evaluation method, and this understanding has begun to be replaced by more holistic perspectives (Mallet & Cote, 2006).

Studies have shown that coach behaviors directly affect the athlete's development (Chelladurai, 1984; Côté, et al., 1995; Smoll & Smith, 1984).

Coaches are individuals whom athletes trust and respect. They are the ones who influence the direction of change with the methods and techniques applied, shape the future of the team, inspire and mobilize team elements to achieve a goal. Therefore, it is asserted that correct perception of the coach behaviors, as a leader, through adequate communication competence and skills is necessary to realize all these elements (Abakay, 2020).

The relationship between the coach and the athlete is a determining factor in achieving performance success in competitive sports. Because there is dependence between a coach and the athletes in the sports environment. A coach tries to reveal the need to transfer the knowledge, skills, and competence to performance or success to the athlete, as this commitment requires the use of knowledge, skills, and competence of the coach from the athletes' perspective. Therefore, both elements (coach-athlete) must maintain a professional relationship and cooperate to increase sportive performance or achieve success (Antonini & Seiler, 2006).

Previous studies on exercise and sports psychology offer various models to describe or describe the relationship between coach and athletes (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henshen, 2002). For instance, Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) proposed three different dimensions using a model developed by Kelly et al. (1983). These dimensions of the coach and athlete relationship imply that personal feelings, thoughts, and behaviors towards interpersonal communication are mutually and causally interdependent (Antonini & Seiler, 2006).

The "Commitment" dimension indicates the continuity of the relationship, the desire for it, and the positive intention. It can be argued that it involves committing without expecting anything in return.

The "Closeness" dimension includes a mutual emotional attachment, liking, trust, and respect. The "complementarity" dimension expresses the importance of a communication process that develops a sense of cooperation and cooperation through teamwork (working in a friendly, sensitive, and willing manner) (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005).

Hence, a coach should express one's feelings and thoughts clearly, anticipate where and how the athletes will exhibit attitudes, believe and feel, and act accordingly. It is argued that the positive relationships between the coach and athletes increase their motivation and satisfaction and facilitate nourishing environments for them to develop their skills (Abakay, 2013).

Coach behavior can change with the characteristics of the athletes in the team they train and other external factors. It is wrong to distinguish as good and bad coach types. The important thing is that coaches know their leadership styles and can make changes in these per the characteristics of their trainees. For instance, a coach with insecure athletes may be wrong to apply a democratic coaching style, while a very autocratic style that sets strict rules may also be not suitable. Leadership behaviors of coaches can be determined by the perceptions of athletes and players, and accordingly, studies can be conducted to determine athlete satisfaction (Terlemez 2019).

The primary purpose of this study was determined to reveal how amateur athletes assess coach behavior, which is thought to contribute significantly to sportive performance and success.

## METHOD

This study is a descriptive attempt to examine the amateur athlete views on the evaluation of coach behavior. This study was approved by Selcuk University Faculty of Sport Sciences, non-interventional clinical research ethics committee, with the decision numbered E-40990478-050.99-92850 and 97. The research sample comprises individuals actively engaged in team and individual sports in Konya for 2019. A total of 23 branches were included in the interviews. Data were collected from athletes comprising 23 different branches such as basketball, field hockey, football, handball, and volleyball from team sports, and athletics, badminton, cycling, wrestling, weightlifting, judo, table tennis, taekwondo, tennis, and swimming from individual sports. The research sample comprises randomly selected amateur athletes recruited on a voluntary basis. A total of 773 athletes (578 male, 195 female) were recruited. The average sample age was determined as  $16.83 \pm 2.59$  for males, and  $17.41 \pm 3.24$  for females. The study has a descriptive design.

The distribution of other variables is available in Table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of Individual Features**

Variables	Groups	n	%
Gender	Female	195	25.2
	Male	578	74.8
Age	14-16	324	41.9

	17-19	361	46.7
	20-23	64	8.3
	24+	24	3.1
<b>Branch Status</b>	Team sport	554	71.7
	Individual Sport	219	28.3
<b>Sports Experience</b>	0-2 years	111	14.4
	3-4 years	218	28.2
	5-6 years	244	31.6
	7+ years	200	25.9

The data collection tool utilized in this study was developed by Cote et al. (1999) and adapted to Turkish society by Yapar and İnce (2014) under the title “Coach Behavior Assessment Scale for Athletes.” The scale used is a 7-point Likert-type scale with 7 sub-dimensions, including 47 items. The adaptation study of this scale into Turkish was conducted on male and female athletes between the ages 14-22 and engaged in individual and team sports. Since these are similar to the research sample, a re-reliability analysis was not necessary. Internal consistency of the scale sub-dimensions in the adaptation study was calculated between .79 and .87 (Yapar & İnce, 2014).

The scale data were digitalized, and statistical analyzes were performed through the SPSS 20.0 package program. Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality tests were conducted to determine whether the research data showed normal distribution. Kurtosis-Skewness values were examined for the datasets that did not have a normal distribution, and it was found that the values were between + 2/-2. Thus, the data has a normal distribution. Thus, the independent samples t-test was used for paired groups, and the OneWay ANOVA test was used for multiple groups. Pearson’s correlation analysis was used to determine the correlation between the two variables.

## FINDINGS

**Table 2: The distribution of the scale sub-dimension averages**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Std. Deviation
<b>Physical Training and Planning</b>	773.00	1.29	7.00	5.29	1.30
<b>Technical Skills</b>	773.00	1.00	7.00	5.81	1.30
<b>Mental Preparation</b>	773.00	1.00	7.00	5.45	1.50
<b>Target Setting</b>	773.00	1.00	7.00	5.48	1.39
<b>Competition Strategy</b>	773.00	1.00	7.00	5.60	1.39
<b>Positive Coach Behavior</b>	773.00	1.33	7.00	5.71	1.32
<b>Negative Coach Behavior</b>	773.00	1.00	7.00	3.64	1.66

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of the scale sub-dimension averages. It was determined that the amateur athletes in the sample assessed their coaches’ behavior positively. Technical skills ( $x=5.81$ ) and positive coach behavior ( $x=5.71$ ) were found to be the most influential, while negative coach behavior ( $x=3.64$ ) was found to have the lowest level of impact.

**Table 3: Coach Behavior Assessment Comparison by Branch Status**

		N	Average	Std. Deviation	t	p
<b>Physical Training and Planning</b>	Team sport	554	5.18	1.25	-3.776	0.001
	Individual Sport	219	5.57	1.38		
<b>Technical Skills</b>	Team sport	554	5.72	1.28	-2.889	0.004
	Individual Sport	219	6.02	1.32		
<b>Mental Preparation</b>	Team sport	554	5.41	1.38	-1.071	0.285
	Individual Sport	219	5.54	1.75		
<b>Target Setting</b>	Team sport	554	5.38	1.33	-3.058	0.002
	Individual Sport	219	5.72	1.52		
<b>Competition Strategy</b>	Team sport	554	5.53	1.36	-2.191	0.029
	Individual Sport	219	5.78	1.45		
<b>Positive Coach Behavior</b>	Team sport	554	5.68	1.30	-1.903	0.275
	Individual Sport	219	5.80	1.38		
<b>Negative Coach Behavior</b>	Team sport	554	3.67	1.60	0.832	0.405
	Individual Sport	219	3.56	1.79		

Table 3 demonstrates the coach behavior assessment comparison by branch status. There was a significant difference in favor of individual athletes in sub-dimensions of physical training and planning, technical skill, mental preparation, target setting, and competition strategy ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 4: Coach Behavior Assessment Comparison by Gender**

	Gender	N	Average	Std. Deviation	t	p
Physical Training and Planning	Female	195	5.21	1.52	2.784	0.006
	Male	578	5.51	1.20		
Technical Skills	Female	195	5.88	1.31	0.884	0.377
	Male	578	5.78	1.29		
Mental Preparation	Female	195	5.62	1.53	1.905	0.057
	Male	578	5.39	1.48		
Target Setting	Female	195	5.52	1.53	1.940	0.053
	Male	578	5.65	1.34		
Competition Strategy	Female	195	5.74	1.51	1.605	0.109
	Male	578	5.56	1.34		
Positive Coach Behavior	Female	195	5.69	1.58	1.071	0.285
	Male	578	5.80	1.23		
Negative Coach Behavior	Female	195	3.57	1.78	-0.732	0.46
	Male	578	3.67	1.62		

Table 4 presents the coach behavior assessment comparison by gender. There was a significant difference in favor of males in the physical training and planning sub-dimension ( $p < 0.05$ ). There was no significant difference by gender in other sub-dimensions ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 5: Correlation between Age and Scale Sub-dimension Scores**

		Physical Training and Planning	Technical Skills	Mental Preparation	Target Setting	Positive Coach Behavior	Negative Coach Behavior
Age	r	.715**	.742**	.709**	.781**	.703**	.077*
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.032
	n	773	773	773	773	773	773

Table 5 shows the correlation between age and scale sub-dimension scores. There is a significant difference in all sub-dimensions. Although there is a weak positive correlation in the negative behaviors sub-dimension, a strong positive correlation was determined in the other sub-dimensions.

**Table 6: Coach Behavior Assessment Comparison by Sports Experience**

		Square Sum	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	far
Physical Training and Planning	BetweenGroups	41.152	3	13.717	8.385	.000	1-3, 1-4 2-4, 3-4
	WithinGroups	1258.096	769	1.636			
	Total	1299.248	772				
Technical Skills	BetweenGroups	42.975	3	14.325	8.799	.000	1-3,1-4 2-3,2-4
	WithinGroups	1251.955	769	1.628			
	Total	1294.929	772				
Mental Preparation	BetweenGroups	36.710	3	12.237	5.560	.001	1-2, 1-3 1-4,2-4
	WithinGroups	1692.392	769	2.201			
	Total	1729.102	772				
Target Setting	BetweenGroups	39.119	3	13.040	6.856	.000	1-3,1-4. 2-3,2-4
	WithinGroups	1462.472	769	1.902			
	Total	1501.591	772				
Competition Strategy	BetweenGroups	44.288	3	14.763	7.893	.000	1-3 1-4



							2-4
	WithinGroups	1438.299	769	1.870			
	Total	1482.587	772				
<b>Positive Coach Behavior</b>	BetweenGroups	15.537	3	5.179	2.974	.031	1-4
	WithinGroups	1339.148	769	1.741			
	Total	1354.686	772				
<b>Negative Coach Behavior</b>	BetweenGroups	181.676	3	60.559	23.931	.000	4-1, 4-2 4-3, 3-1 3-2
	WithinGroups	1945.997	769	2.531			
	Total	2127.673	772				

Groups: 1st group (0-2 years), 2nd group (3-4 years), 3rd group (5-6 years), 4th group (7+ years)

Table 6 details the coach behavior assessment comparison by sports experience. There is a significant difference in all sub-dimensions. LSD test was conducted to determine the groups with the difference. The assessment scores of those with a sports history of 0-2 years and 3-4 years were higher than those of 5 years or more in the physical training and planning, technical skill, mental preparation, and target setting dimensions.

Moreover, the assessment scores of those with sports experience of 0-2 years were higher than those with a sports history of 5+ years in the competition strategy dimension, while those with a sports history of 3-4 years were higher than those with a sports history of 7+ years or more.

The assessment score of the athletes with 0-2 years of sport experience was higher than those with 7+ years in the positive behavior sub-dimension. Furthermore, those with 5+ years' experience were higher than those of 4 years and less, and those with 5-6 years' had higher scores than participants with 3-4 years of sports history in the negative behavior sub-dimension.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The amateur footballer opinions on the coach behavior assessment revealed that the test scores were above the average. It was determined that participants stated that their coaches' technical skills and positive behavioral traits were better than other traits, and their negative behavior traits were assessed to be at the lowest level. (Technical Skills  $X=5.81$ , Positive Coach Behavior  $X=5.71$ , Competitive Strategy  $X=5.60$ , Goal Setting  $X=5.48$ , Mental Preparation  $X=5.45$ , Physical Training and Planning  $X=5.29$ , Negative Coach Behavior  $X=3.67$ ). Thus, it can be asserted that amateur athletes assess the coach behaviors positively. Çebi et al. (2019) found athletes' coach assessment positive in general, while the highest average was in the technical skill dimension.

Considering the assessments in the research sample with branch status, it was concluded that active individual sports athletes assess coach behaviors more positively than athletes in team sports for the sub-dimensions of physical training and planning, technical skills, mental preparation, target setting, and competition strategy. There was no difference between the groups in terms of positive and negative behavior. Previous studies support our findings (Ermiş et al. 2017, Çebi et al. 2019, İmamoğlu and Çetin 2016).

It was found that males had higher scores in physical training and planning dimensions in coach behavior assessment. This result may be rooted in the level and intensity of training having higher pressure on male athletes. Studies have findings in favor of males regarding physical training and planning (Gök and Okan 2020, Çebi et al. 2019, İmamoğlu and Çetin 2016).

Significant positive correlations were found between age and coach behavior assessment. Although there is a weak positive correlation in the negative behaviors sub-dimension, a strong positive correlation was determined in the other sub-dimensions. Therefore, it can be asserted that as the age increases in amateur athletes, there is a positive improvement in coach behavior assessments. Gök and Okan (2020) stated that as athletes get older, they evaluate the physical training and planning behaviors more positively. Hazar et al. (2019) found that athletes in the younger age groups may encounter specific difficulties to work in harmony with their coaches and adapting to the environment compared to older team members.

The comparison by sports experience revealed that the assessment scores of those with less sports background were higher in the sub-dimensions of physical training and planning, technical skills, mental preparation, and target setting. It was determined that the participants with 0-2 years' experience had higher assessment scores than those with 7+ years' history in the positive coach behavior dimension. Moreover, athletes with a long history in sports had higher assessment scores in the negative coach behavior dimension. These data show that participants with limited athletic backgrounds assessed the planning, preparation, and strategies for improving the competition and training skills of the coaches more positively, but they consider the negative coach behavior as a negative aspect. Therefore, it can be concluded that negative coach behaviors are evaluated more positively as the sportive experience increases.

It was determined that the amateur athletes in the study evaluated the coach behaviors positively. Individual sports had higher positivity rates than team sports in the physical training and planning, technical skills, mental preparation, target setting, and competition strategy sub-dimensions. Moreover, females evaluated the coach behaviors more positively in the physical training and planning dimensions. It was found that the coach behavior assessments are more positive with higher age, less sports experience, higher planning, preparation, and strategies of the trainers to improve their competition and training skills as even some negative coach behaviors are assessed more positively with higher sportive experience.

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