

## The Relationship Between the Sport-Confidence and the Coach-Athlete Relationship in Student-Athletes

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Received: June 25, 2018

Accepted: July 17, 2018

Online Published: July 19, 2018

doi:10.11114/jets.v6i10.3388

URL: <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v6i10.3388>

### Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between the sport-confidence and the coach-athlete relationship in Turkish national male student-wrestlers, and to investigate whether educational status, wrestling style, wrestling category, and career of wrestlers were significant variables on student-wrestlers' sport confidence and their relationship with their coaches. Participants were 198 Turkish national male wrestlers. Demographic questions, the Sport-Confidence Inventory (Vealey, 1986), and the Coach Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004) were performed for data collection. Results indicated that sport-confidence was significantly related to coach-athlete relationship and sport-confidence was significant predictor of wrestlers' relationship with their coaches. Besides, wrestling style and wrestling category were significant variables on coach-athlete relationship. However, educational status and career of wrestlers were not significant variables in terms of sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship. In conclusion, the findings of the study highlight that the association of sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship can contribute to the understanding of relational process in sport.

**Keywords:** sport-confidence, coach-athlete relationship, educational status, elite wrestler

### 1. Introduction

Coach-athlete relationship is defined as interpersonal relationship where the emotions, thoughts, and behaviors of the coach and the athlete are causally and mutually interconnected (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004; Adie & Jowett, 2010; Isoard-Gauthier, Touilloud, Gustafsson & Guillet-Descas, 2016). The coach-athlete relationship was separated into three dimensions that reflect these interconnected emotions, thoughts, and behaviors as closeness, commitment, and complementarity. Closeness is defined as feeling emotionally close in the coach-athlete relationship; it reflects mutual trust, respect and appreciation, as well as a predilection towards liking one another. Commitment is characterized by the intention to maintain a long-term athletic partnership. Complementarity refers to complementary or cooperative coach-athlete interactions. These dimensions are considered to be indicators of the quality of the coach-athlete relationship (Isoard-Gauthier et al., 2016).

It was stated as important by Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004) to examine antecedents and outcomes, as well as moderating and mediating variables of the coach-athlete relationship. Besides, the effect of coach-athlete relationship on motivational levels, performance, attrition, burnout, and confidence levels or vice versa was suggested for next researches for the coach-athlete relationship to be understood in an integrated approach.

The coach-athlete relationship construct has been examined within years in terms of performance (Rhind & Jowett, 2010; Jowett & Nezek, 2012; Sagar & Jowett, 2012; Jowett & Cramer, 2009), collective efficacy (Hampson & Jowett, 2014), motivational dispositions (Adie & Jowett, 2010; Riley & Smith, 2011; Jowett et al., 2017), well-being (Blanchard, Amiot, Perreault, Vallerant & Provencher, 2009; Felton & Jowett, 2013; Davis & Jowett, 2014; Jowett & Cramer, 2009), personality traits (Yang, Jowett & Chan, 2015), need satisfaction (Choi, Cho & Huh, 2013; Felton & Jowett, 2013; Riley & Smith, 2011), burnout (Isoard-Gauthier et al., 2016), personal growth (Sanchez, Lorenzo, Jimenez & Lorenzo, 2017), passion (Lafrenière, Jowett, Vallerand, Donahue & Larimer, 2008; Lafrenière, Jowett, Vallerand & Carbonneau, 2011), stress (Thelwell, Wagstaff, Chapman & Kenttä 2017), self-efficacy (Jackson, Grove & Beauchamp, 2010). However, it is seen that the coach-athlete relationship and confidence has not been examined relationally.

Sport-confidence concept that has been adapted by Vealey (1986) to measure sport-specific self-confidence originated from the constructs of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), perceived competence (Harter, 1978), and performance expectancy (Corbin, 1981) has been defined as the belief or degree of certainty individuals possess about their ability to be successful in sport. Sport-confidence concept has been separated into two dimensions as trait sport-confidence (SC-trait) that is the belief or degree of certainty individuals *usually* possess about their ability to be successful in sport, and state sport-confidence (SC- state) that is the belief or degree of certainty individuals at *one particular moment* possess about their ability to be successful in sport (Vealey, 1986). Self-efficacy beliefs that are the source of confidence are stated to be determinants of individuals' feelings, thoughts, motivation sources, and important mediator of all types of behavior (Pajares, 1997). Sport-confidence that was conceptualized to predict achievement behavior in sport environment (Vealey, 1986) has been the research interest of sport psychology. Self-confidence of athletes is enhanced when they achieve their goals, engage in effective self-regulation of cognitions and behavior and train and compete in a competitive climate that is supportive, challenging, comfortable and motivating (Vealey, Garner-Holman, Hayashi & Giacobbi, 1998). The competitive climate here was stated as positive and achievement-nurturing climate which includes the sources of social support, coaches' leadership, vicarious experience, environmental comfort and situational favorableness.

Several researches have been examined on sport-confidence in sport context. Results revealed that self-confidence was predictor of performance (Jones, Swain & Hardy, 1993; Jones, Hanton & Connaughton, 2002; Craft, Magyar, Becker & Feltz, 2003; Hays, Thomas, Maynard & Bawden, 2009). Besides, high anxiety situations could be more easily coped with when having high confidence (Hardy, Jones & Gould, 1996) and in the absence of self-confidence, increases in competitive anxiety intensity debilitated performance (Hanton, Mellalieu & Hall, 2004). Furthermore, sport-confidence was related to experience (Comeig, Grau-Grau, Jaramillo-Gutierrez & Ramirez, 2016), motivational dispositions (Magyar & Feltz, 2003), peer interaction (Hwang, Machida & Choi, 2017) locus of control, optimism and well-being (Şar & Işıklar, 2012), and self-efficacy (Bozkurt, Koruç, Arslan & Kocaekşi, 2012).

As seen in research studies, coach-athlete relationship and sport-confidence concepts have many things in common. For example, both the coach-athlete relationship and the sport-confidence are related to some variables such as performance, motivational dispositions, and well-being. In this respect, it can be expected that both structures are related to each other. Besides, it can be considered that there is a relationship between the coach athlete relationship and the sport-confidence, because motivational climate is expressed as a structure formed by the attitudes and behaviors of the coaches (Ames, 1992). When the literature is examined, the relation between the coach-athlete relationship and the sport-confidence, which are important determinants of performance, have not been examined relationally and which concept can predict the other has not been investigated. With this research, this relationship can be exhibited, and the concepts of coach athlete relationship and sport confidence can be understood in an integrated and relational approach.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants

Participants were 198 Turkish national male wrestlers whose mean age was 20,02 (SD=4,50) and career average was 9,14 years (SD=4,39). Participants wrestle in two different styles (Freestyle N=89, Greco-Roman style N= 109). 119 wrestlers' educational status was high school and 79 wrestlers' educational status was university. Participants wrestle in three categories (Cadet N= 79, Junior N=50, Senior N=69). Demographic features of wrestlers have been presented in table 1.

Table 1. Demographic features of participants.

	N	Mean	Sd
<b>Age</b>	198	20.02	4.50
<b>Career</b>	198	9.14	4.39
	Freestyle	89	
<b>Style</b>	Greco-roman	109	
	High school	119	
<b>Educational status</b>	University	79	
	Cadet	79	
<b>Category</b>	Junior	50	
	Senior	69	

### 2.2 Procedure

Wrestling national team camps are set up separately in terms of categories and styles in different dates. Therefore, wrestlers were reached at national team camps on different dates for each category and styles (e.g., freestyle-cadet, greco-roman-cadet). The purpose and the content of the investigation were explained to athletes. Each participant who consented to participate was supplied a questionnaire. Questionnaire contained demographic questions (e.g., age, style, category, career), the Sport-Confidence Inventory (Vealey, 1986), and the Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004). Following the instructions supplied by the researcher, participants completed the questionnaire independently.

### 2.3 Instruments

#### 2.3.1 Sport-Confidence Inventory

Sport-Confidence Inventory was developed by Vealey (1986) in two dimensions as Trait Sport-Confidence Inventory (TSCI) and State Sport-Confidence Inventory (SSCI), and adapted to Turkish by Engür, Tok and Tatar (2005). In this research Trait Sport-Confidence Inventory was used for data collection. The overall internal consistency coefficient of the trait sport-confidence was reported as 0,91. TSCI composes of 13 items that only measure sport specific self-confidence and ask subject to rate how confident they generally feel when competing in sports. A 9-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (low) to 9 (high) was used for each item.

#### 2.3.2 Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire

The Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q) that was developed by Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004) and adapted to Turkish by Altıntaş, Kazak Çetinkalp and Aşçı (2012) was used to assess the athletes' perceptions of the quality of the relationship with their coach. Internal consistency coefficients were reported to range from 0,82 to 0,90 for athletes and Turkish version of CART-Q was found acceptable to determine coach-athlete relationship. The CART-Q measures athletes' direct perceptions of closeness (e.g., "I respect my coach"), commitment (e.g., "I am committed to my coach"), and complementarity (e.g., "When I am with my coach I am ready to do my best"). The items are rated on a 7-point response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with a mean of the 11-items being calculated to indicate the overall quality of the coach-athlete relationship. Higher scores indicated greater relationship quality in terms of closeness, commitment, and complementarity (3Cs).

### 2.4 Data Analysis

Analyses were performed by using SPSS (Version 20.0). Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlation, linear regression, one-way anova, and independent-samples t-test were calculated for the study variables.

## 3. Results

Table 2. Relationship between sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship.

		Closeness	Commitment	Complementarity
Sport-Confidence	Pearson correlation	.38	.37	.30
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.00	.00	.00
	N	198	198	198

Associations between the sport-confidence and the coach-athlete relationship were analyzed by Bivariate Correlation. As seen in Table 2, sport-confidence of national male wrestlers is positively and significantly related to coach-athlete relationship (closeness  $p < 0.01$ ; commitment  $p < 0.01$ ; complementarity  $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 3. Linear Regression Analysis on Predicting Coach-Athlete Relationship.

Variable	B	Standart Error	Beta	t	p
Constant	3.05	.48		6.32	.00
Sport-confidence	0.39	.07	.37	5.62	.00

$R = 0.37$ ,  $R^2 = 0.14$ ,  $F(1, 196) = 31.53$ ,  $p = .00$

Table 3 presents the regression analysis of sport-confidence on predicting coach-athlete relationship. The result reveals that sport-confidence is a significant predictor of coach-athlete relationship ( $R = 0.37$ ,  $R^2 = 0.14$ ,  $F(1, 196) = 31.53$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and it can be stated 14% of the total variance related to coach-athlete relationship is accounted by the sport-confidence.

Table 4. Comparison of sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship of wrestlers in terms of wrestling styles.

	Style	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	Sig.
Closeness	Freestyle	89	6.32	1.03	196	4.24	.00
	Greco-Roman	109	5.50	1.56			
Commitment	Freestyle	89	5.83	1.16	196	2.66	.00
	Greco-Roman	109	5.29	1.60			
Complementarity	Freestyle	89	5.94	1.02	196	2.49	.01
	Greco-Roman	109	5.50	1.37			
Sport-Confidence	Freestyle	89	7.11	1.20	196	1.86	.06
	Greco-Roman	109	6.78	1.26			

Table 4 presents the comparison of wrestling styles in terms of sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship. Analyses were performed by Independent Samples T-Test. Results show that freestyle wrestlers' closeness, commitment, and complementarity scores are significantly higher than greco-roman style wrestlers' (closeness  $p < 0.01$ ; commitment

$p < 0.01$ ; complementarity  $p < 0.05$ ). Although freestyle wrestlers' sport-confidence means are higher than greco-roman style wrestlers', it is not significantly higher ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 5. Comparison of sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship of wrestlers in terms of educational status.

	Educational Status	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	Sig.
Closeness	High school	119	5.97	1.47	196	1.15	.25
	University	79	5.73	1.31			
Commitment	High school	119	5.61	1.50	196	0.87	.38
	University	79	5.42	1.35			
Complementarity	High school	119	5.74	1.30	196	0.60	.54
	University	79	5.63	1.16			
Sport-Confidence	High school	119	6.84	1.30	196	-1.19	.23
	University	79	7.06	1.14			

National male wrestlers' closeness, commitment, complementarity, and sport-confidence scores with regard to educational status were analyzed by Independent Samples T-test. Results demonstrate that wrestlers' closeness ( $p > 0.05$ ), commitment ( $p > 0.05$ ), complementarity ( $p > 0.05$ ), and sport-confidence ( $p > 0.05$ ) scores do not differ from significantly in terms of educational status.

Table 6. Comparison of sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship of wrestlers in terms of categories.

	Category	N	Mean	Sd	F	Sig.	Sig. Dif.
Closeness	Cadet	79	6.18	1.35	3.72	.02	Cadet-Junior
	Junior	50	5.52	1.50			Cadet-Senior
	Senior	69	5.77	1.35			Junior-Senior
Commitment	Cadet	79	5.85	1.32	3.80	.02	Cadet-Junior
	Junior	50	5.16	1.60			Cadet-Senior
	Senior	69	5.44	1.39			Junior-Senior
Complementarity	Cadet	79	5.92	1.15	2.41	.09	
	Junior	50	5.45	1.37			
	Senior	69	5.63	1.22			
Sport-Confidence	Cadet	79	7.05	1.31	.77	.46	
	Junior	50	6.77	1.34			
	Senior	69	6.91	1.07			

According to Table 6, sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship of wrestlers in terms of categories were compared by One-Way Anova. Results put forward that there are significant differences between categories with regard to closeness ( $p < 0.05$ ) and commitment ( $p < 0.05$ ). To reveal which categories differ from others, Scheffe test was performed. Results show that the significant differences in both closeness and commitment are observed between the categories of cadet-junior, cadet-senior, junior-senior. However, the differences between the categories in terms of complementarity ( $p > 0.05$ ) and sport-confidence ( $p > 0.05$ ) are not significant.

Table 7. Relationship between career and coach-athlete relationship, sport-confidence.

	Closeness	Commitment	Complementarity	Sport-Confidence
Correlation	-.12	-.11	-.08	.03
Sig.	.11	.12	.28	.72
N	198	198	198	198

As can be seen in Table 7, the relationship between career and coach-athlete relationship, sport-confidence was analyzed by Bivariate Correlation. Results put forward that career of the wrestlers is not related to coach-athlete relationship (closeness  $p > 0.05$ ; commitment  $p > 0.05$ ; complementarity  $p > 0.05$ ) and sport-confidence ( $p > 0.05$ ) significantly.

#### 4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between the sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship and also to find out whether sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship were related to wrestling styles, educational status, wrestling categories, and career. The result revealed that sport-confidence of national male wrestlers was positively and significantly related to their relationship with their coaches. Besides, sport-confidence of wrestlers was found as a significant predictor of their relationship with their coaches. Furthermore, the freestyle wrestlers' closeness, commitment, and complementarity scores were significantly higher than the greco-roman style wrestlers'. Although the freestyle wrestlers' sport-confidence means were higher than the greco-roman style wrestlers', it was not significantly higher. Educational status of the wrestlers was not related significantly to their sport-confidence and relationship with their coaches. Categories of the wrestlers were significant variables in terms of closeness and commitment to their coaches.

Finally, career of the wrestlers were not related significantly to their sport-confidence and relationship with their coaches.

Sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship concepts that are related to performance have been examined several times as previously mentioned with regard to different constructs such as well-being, motivational dispositions, need satisfaction, anxiety, passion, etc. However, sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship have not been investigated relationally. With this study, it was put forward that sport-confidence was significantly related to coach-athlete relationship and sport-confidence was significant predictor of athletes' relationship with their coaches. Thus, the results of the research will contribute to a better understanding of sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship from a relational perspective. Whatever the sports branch is, the main goal is to be successful in all sports branches. When considered from this point of view, investigation of these two concepts that are so closely related to sport performance (Rhind & Jowett, 2010; Jowett & Nezelek, 2012; Sagar & Jowett, 2012; Jowett & Cramer, 2009; Jones et al., 1993; Jones et al., 2002; Craft et al., 2003; Hays et al., 2009) from different perspectives may also contribute to the practitioners in the field, and to the researchers who are doing theoretical and empirical work on the field. When the literature is examined, although there is not any research on the relationship between sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship, it is possible to find some researches on coach-athlete relationship and well-being and self-efficacy that are related to sport-confidence with regard to meaning. For example, Felton and Jowett (2013) found that athletes' perceptions of satisfaction of basic psychological needs mediated the association between their attachment styles and well-being. Jowett and Cramer (2009) put forward that personal relationships were likely to contribute to athletes' overall well-being. Davis and Jowett (2014) found that coach-athlete relationship quality was related to well-being. Jackson, Grove and Beauchamp (2010) put forward that interpersonal relationship was related to self-efficacy.

Another result of the research reveals that the freestyle wrestlers' closeness and commitment to their coaches were greater than the greco-roman style wrestlers'. Freestyle wrestling is a traditional sport in Turkey. For example, "Kırkpınar" oil wrestling is a tradition of 656 years. Master-apprentice relationship is regarded as an integral part of this tradition and is still being kept alive. Furthermore, oil wrestling is performed in freestyle. The result that is in favor of freestyle wrestlers may be considered as an outcome of this tradition.

The closeness, commitment, complementarity, and sport-confidence of the wrestlers were examined with regard to their educational status. The results demonstrated that educational status was not a significant variable on coach-athlete relationship and sport-confidence. Öztürk, Bayazit and Gencer (2016) similarly found that educational status was not a significant variable on sport-confidence.

In the research, the wrestlers' closeness and commitment scores differed in terms of categories. The categories of wrestling are formed according to age groups. Cadet wrestling category consists of wrestlers between the ages of 15-17. Junior wrestling category consists of wrestlers between the ages of 18-23 and, senior wrestling category consists of wrestlers above 23 years. The results obtained from the research showed that the cadet wrestlers' closeness and commitment scores were higher than the junior and senior wrestlers'. Besides, the senior wrestlers' closeness and commitment scores were higher than the junior wrestlers'. It is seen that wrestlers' closeness and commitment are greater in lower age groups. However, closeness and commitment scores decrease in middle age groups. On the contrary, closeness and commitment scores increase in upper age groups. It can be assumed that this result is due to age-related developmental periods. Nonetheless, this result may also be due to the different forms of relationship preferred by the coaches in different categories.

The last result of the study indicates that the career of the wrestlers was not a significant variable on coach-athlete relationship and sport confidence. Nevertheless, Comeig, Grau-Grau, Gutierrez and Ramirez (2016) put forward that experience in competitive sports was related to higher self-confidence. The research group in this study comprised of national wrestlers. In this respect, all the wrestlers are successful athletes in their branches. Thus, the reason why the sport-confidence of the wrestlers participated in this research did not differ in terms of career may be due to being consisted of the wrestlers whose self-confidence were already high. Similarly, Selağzı and Çepikkurt (2014) demonstrated athletes' relationship did not differ in terms of career.

In conclusion, sport-confidence and wrestlers' relationship with their coaches are related to each other. Sport-confidence is an important factor that affects wrestlers' relationship with their coaches. Moreover, the wrestling styles performed by wrestlers and wrestling categories that wrestlers take part in are the important variables in terms of their relationship with their coaches. Nevertheless, educational status and career of wrestlers are not important variables in terms of coach-athlete relationship. Lastly, sport-confidence of the wrestlers does not differ in terms of wrestling category, wrestling style, educational status, and career.

Finally, this study has some limitations. Research was conducted with national male wrestlers in Turkey. Sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship of athletes may differ depending on the society they live in and the culture they have. In addition, examining the relation between sport-confidence and coach-athlete relationship in different sport branches may contribute to generalizability of the findings of the research.

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