

Investigation of Attachment Styles and Levels of Athletes in Different Branches to Their Coaches

Canan Bastık

Faculty of Sports Science, Uludag University, Bursa, Turkey

Tel: 90-532-668-1055 E-mail: canan_bastik@hotmail.com

Hayrettin Gümüřdađ (Corresponding Author)

Faculty of Sports Science, Yozgat Bozok University, Yozgat, Turkey

Tel: 90-532-286-3868 E-mail: hgumusdag06@hotmail.com

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the attachment styles in the relationships between coach and individual and team sports athlete. Attachment styles are related to how people interact with other people and how they are influenced by their experiences. Attachment styles may vary in stability later in a person's life. Because of this, it is possible that the attachment styles of athletes, coaches or educators can be influenced by each other in sports environments. Relations between coach-athlete/athlete-coach are very important for the success of the sporting. The universe of the research is composed of athletes and coaches living in Çorum province, and the sample of the research is composed of 179 athletes (99 woman, 89 man) living in Çorum province and selected by random methods. Turkish version of the Attachment Styles Scale developed by Davis and Jowett (2013) and adapted by Zengin (2019), consisting of 19 items and 3 sub-dimensions, was used in the Relationships between the personal information form created by the researchers and the coach-athlete. It was transferred to the SPSS program and made ready for analysis. The Independent Simple T Test and One Way Anova tests were used from the parametric tests.

As a result, it determined that there is a significant difference in the safe attachment sub-dimension between the genders of the athletes and the level of attachment of the athlete to the coach. The relationships between coach-athlete/athlete-coach are very important for performance and success, it is recommended that research be conducted in this direction and its results be revealed.

Keywords: Coach, Athlete, Attachment, Style

1. Introduction

Coaching is a planned development relationship established between the coach and the client (coachee) in order to achieve the performance and life satisfaction desired by the individuals. It covers the process of informing, supporting, observing, feedback, monitoring and development for the purpose. The purpose of the coaching relationship is for the client to reach the goal he has set himself, with the support of the coach, and to learn to overcome his problems on his own.

A coach in a sport is defined as “people who are obliged to provide training to athletes and contribute to their healthy upbringing (Turkish Language Society, 2019). Whitmore (2010) defines coaches as those who guide and support the athlete to increase his/her existing potential to the highest levels.

Sport, on the other hand, is an attitude that “satisfies one’s basic needs and helps one achieve goals based on one’s biological instincts. The goal here can be personal, social or economic. Sport is not only a physical activity, but also an opportunity for a person to integrate into society and live in harmony with society. That is why the effects of exercise create favorable opportunities for the emergence and control of emotions. People who are engaged in sports have the opportunity to tell about themselves through actions. Aggression, anger, shyness, jealousy, etc. they are also called negative attitudes. It allows to express emotions and control negative emotions. Therefore, it positively affects the adaptation process. Also, sports have a positive effect on the nervous system and help the system function consistently. Therefore, it helps to reduce excessive excitement, aggression and tension. On the other hand, achievements in sports also increase self-confidence” (Feist, 1990). The concept of an athlete can be defined as an individual who plays sports, an individual who actively plays sports, or an individual who participates in competitions. In the Turkish dictionary, athlete means a person who plays sports (TLS, 2019). Athletes can be distinguished by such aspects as branch, category, gender, amateur and professional gender.

Attachment styles are related to how people interact with other people and how they are influenced by their experiences. Attachment styles may vary in stability later in a person’s life. Because of this, it is possible that the attachment styles of peers, colleagues, athletes, coaches or educators can be influenced by each other in sports environments. Relations between coach-athlete/athlete-coach are very important for the success of the sporting. Davis and Jowett (2010) used the basic structures of attachment theory to generate information and understanding in the context of sports, expressing the need for attachment styles and a valid and reliable measure of them in athlete-coach relationships and developing a new psychometric scale for this purpose (Zengin, 2019).

In order for the communication between the athlete and the coaches to be strong, the coach must have skills. These skills; empathy, body language, giving feedback, positive approach to communication, listening, expressive speech, persuasion skills such as communication between the coach and the athlete will greatly benefit as long as the coach uses the skills

effectively. Coaches have to maximize their communication skills in order to receive the transmitted messages correctly and be able to respond again. Of course, this is not one-sided, but the athlete's ability to perceive the coach should be sufficient. In order for mutual communication to be strong, the coach must also maintain his reputation within himself. We can mention some methods to increase reputation (Ivancevich et al., 2005).

“Cooperating with athletes,

- Being able to be reliable, being honest in all circumstances;
- Being sincere;
- Behave positively;
- Honest about whether sports knowledge is enough behave;
- Using feedback effectively;
- Ability to monitor the process of message delivery;
- Ability to regulate the flow of information;
- Ability to increase the sense of mutual trust;
- Ability to empathize;
- Ability to listen effectively;
- Ability to schedule effectively;
- Ability to simplify the language.”

Attachment is the intense feelings that a person has towards the figure when he is sick, afraid or feels in danger, has a relationship with, and feels a strong desire to be near him (Bartholomew & Horowitz 1991).

Attachment is defined as “strong emotional bonds that people develop in their lives towards people they consider important to them (Bowlby, 2012), according to the behavior of the susceptibility and protective connecting babies instinctively to show self—and these people they are connected to adults, they need more experienced, but the quality of this attachment relationship, the interaction between parents and children is that it depends on how much is carers or...” (Cassibba et al., 2000).

According to Jowett and Cockerill (2003), “The relationships of athletes with their coaches in a sports environment are important for both their physical and psychosocial development. It can be said that a healthy coach-athlete relationship process is one of the important criteria for achieving success in sports (Özbay & Erman, 2012). The intrinsic motivation of athletes is closely related to the verbal communication and leadership styles of coaches. In a study conducted by Bekiare (2014), it revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between verbal aggression and anxiety of coaches. Based on the findings related to the types

of communication of the coach, he stated that this issue will take an important place in future research.”

In the research of Smoll and Smith (1989), they stated that coach behaviors and athletes’ reactions to these behaviors determine the individual changes, situational factors and cognitive processes that are assumed to be mediated. They have developed a model that emphasizes the importance of individual differences such as age, gender self-esteem that affect coaching. The effect of the athlete-coach relationship on the achieved success is evident by the narratives and memories of former athletes. The nature of the athlete-coach relationship has an important role in the development of the athlete, both as an athlete and as a person. The quality of the coach-athlete relationship plays an important role in the development of the athlete both as an athlete and as an individual. Studies show that coaches have an effective role in athlete’s self-esteem and well-being (Côté & Fraser Thomas, 2007). In the sports environment, the relationship of the coach with the athlete is important for the psychosocial and physical development of the athlete (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). Jowett (2007) pioneered the 3+1Cs conceptual model in his study by considering and examining the individual difference characteristics that determine the quality of the coach-athlete relationship such as age, gender, experience and personality when developing this model.” In recent years, developments related to attachment theory have been integrated into the success goal and peer relationship literature, which is also the center of sports and physical activity research, as it has entered the literature. Attachment theory, success goal models and sports peer relationship frameworks have been briefly reviewed and the conceptual between the theories have been examined. Attachment theory, achievement goals, perceived motivational climate, and sports-related issues, and suggests avenues that may offer useful conceptually about their experiences of peer relationships (Carr, 2009). In another study, the researcher provided evidence that the adolescent-parent attachment relationship is significantly related to sports dating experiences. It has been observed that safer adolescent-parent attachment characteristics correspond to more positive sports friendships. In the study, it was that communication between two securely connected athletes was experienced in a sports environment with more positive results than with their insecure connected friends. As a result, they found that adolescent-parent attachment style affects the friendships and work environment of young people in the sports environment (Carr, 2009b). Descriptive findings showed that more positive perceptions of social relationships were associated with more positive motivational outcomes. Overall the study suggests that considering the *combination* of parent, peer group, and friendship relationships is critical to a full understanding of the social relationship-motivation linkage (Frenc & Smith, 2006).

2. Method

2.1 The Research Model

This research can be defined as “research that aims to determine the degree of variation and/or the presence of the model together between two or more variables, based on the “relational screening model”. In addition, the research is descriptive in nature due to the fact that due diligence will be done on attachment styles in the relationships between the coach

and the athlete.” With single scanning models, temporal developments and changes can be determined as well as instantaneous situation determinations. Time-based scans are carried out with two basic approaches; tracking approach and sectioning approach (Karasar, 2007).

2.2 Universe-Sampling

The universe of the study is composed of athletes living in Çorum province, while the sample of the study is composed of 179 athletes living in Çorum province and selected by random methods. Their gender, number and percentage are given in the (Table 1) below.

Table 1. The sample group of the study

Gender	n	%
Woman	99	55.3
Man	89	44.7
Total	179	100

2.3 Data Collection Tools

In this study, Personal Information Form created by the researchers with Davis and Jowett (2013), developed by Cass (Coach-Athlete Attachment Scale) coach-athlete relationships between attachment styles in the Turkish adaptation of the scale of (Rich, 2019) was used. The scale consists of two parts: the coach and the athlete version. In this study, the athlete version of the scale was used and it consists of 19 items. There are 3 sub-dimensions in the scale. These are “Avoidant (8-14 items), Anxious (first 7 items) and Secure Attachment (15-19 items)”. Scoring is performed according to 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (totally agree). Cronbach’s alphas for the current study were .73 for the avoidant items and .75 for the anxious items and .70 for the sucure items.

2.4 Analysis of the Data

Within the scope of the research, the collected data were transferred to the SPSS 25 program and made ready for analysis. The t-test from the parametric tests was used to compare the quantitative continuous data between two independent groups, and the One-way Anova test was used to compare the quantitative continuous data among more than two independent groups. After the Anova test, Tukey test was used as a complementary post-hoc analysis to determine the differences. The level of significance in the analyses was determined to be $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

Table 2. The results of the analysis between the genders of athletes and the levels of coach attachment style

	Gender	n	X±Ss	t	p
Avoidant Attachment	Man	99	2.23±0.43	0.775	0.32
	Woman	80	2.29±0.44		
Anxious Attachment	Man	99	2.32±0.45	2.643	0.29
	Woman	80	2.35±0.46		
Secure Attachment	Man	99	2.84±0.43	2.643	0.02*
	Woman	80	3.69±0.49		

As a result of the Table 2, it was found that there was a significant difference between the genders of the athletes and the level of attachment of the athlete to the coach at the $p < 0.05$ level in the secure attachment sub-dimension, and it was found that the level of commitment of female athletes to the coach was higher than that of men. It was found that there was no significant difference in the avoidant attachment and anxious attachment sub-dimensions.

Table 3. The results of the analysis between the age of the athletes and the level of coach attachment style

	Age Range	n	X±Ss	F	p
Avoidant Attachment	14-20 y.o.	26	2.96±0.47	0.513	0.67
	21-30 y.o.	117	2.86±0.43		
	31-40 y.o.	27	2.85±0.26		
	41-50 y.o.	9	2.97±0.57		
Anxious Attachment	14-20 y.o.	26	2.75±0.41	0.416	0.41
	21-30 y.o.	117	2.62±0.38		
	31-40 y.o.	27	2.76±0.40		
	41-50 y.o.	9	2.68±0.39		
Secure Attachment	14-20 y.o.	26	2.47±0.47	0.764	0.14
	21-30 y.o.	117	2.54±0.43		
	31-40 y.o.	27	2.39±0.26		
	41-50 y.o.	9	2.44±0.46		

As a result of the analysis, with age ranges between the level of connecting with the coach of the athlete athletes which avoids Attachment, anxious attachment, and secure attachment in the lower dimensions $p < 0.05$ level in the absence of a significant difference has not been determined.

Table 4. The results of the analysis between the type of different sport and the of the coach attachment style

	Type of Sport	n	$\bar{X} \pm Ss$	t	p
Avoidant Attachment	Individual	97	3.96±0.63	3.235	0.01*
	Team	82	2.85±0.49		
Anxious Attachment	Individual	97	2.86±0.49	0.452	0.17
	Team	82	2.78±0.47		
Secure Attachment	Individual	97	2.58±0.39	0.368	0.25
	Team	82	2.67±0.42		

As a result of the analyses, it was not found that there was a significant difference between the sport type variable and the level of attachment of the athlete to the coach at the level of $P < 0.05$ in the Avoidant Attachment sub-dimension. According to these results, it can be said that the level of attachment of individual athletes to coaches is higher than the attachment level of team athletes. It was observed that there was no significant difference between Anxious Attachment and Secure Attachment sub-dimensions.

Table 5. The results of the analysis between the sport level variable and the coach attachment style levels

	Level of Sport	n	$\bar{X} \pm Ss$	t	p
Avoidant Attachment	Amateur	158	2.87±0.43	-0.929	0.34
	Professional	21	2.96±0.44		
Anxious Attachment	Amateur	158	2.75±0.42	0.378	0.56
	Professional	21	2.68±0.40		
Secure Attachment	Amateur	158	2.65±0.39	0.493	0.65
	Professional	21	2.69±0.441		

As a result of the statistical, it was found that there was no significant difference between the level of playing sports and the level of attachment of the athlete to the coach in the subscales of Avoidant Attachment, Anxious Attachment and Secure Attachment.

4. Discussion

Attachment theory has been extensively applied within the social psychology literature to examine a number of factors including, relationship quality, self-esteem, distress and well-being. Guided by both attachment theory and self-determination theory and relevant empirical research, the purpose of the current study was to examine whether the satisfaction of athletes' basic psychological needs transfers the effects of athletes' insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) on their levels of wellbeing. While the mediation analyses contained the mediators of basic psychological needs within the coaching and parental relational contexts simultaneously, the findings are discussed separately.

According to the results of the analysis, it was found that there was no statistically significant difference between the age range and the level of playing sports of athletes in all sub-dimensions. According to Altıntaş et al. In the study conducted by (2012), it was concluded that the relationship between the coach and the athlete in different age groups. It is said that there is a difference found a significant difference in coach-athlete relationships according to age (Yıldırım et al., 2019). Elağzı and Çepikkurt (2014) found that age has no effect on coach-athlete relationship in their study. Similarly, Yücel (2010) stated that age has no effect on coach-athlete relationship in his study. Trainers can help athletes develop their positive emotions and life satisfaction with healthy evaluations and positive/optimistic thoughts. It is thought that the sharing environment that develops as a result of the cooperation and efforts made in line with common goals in sports environments, especially in training, increases the level of coach-athlete relationship (Kayhan, 2020). There are studies in the literature that support and do not support the result obtained from our study. In addition, Abakay and Kuru (2011) that the communication between professional and amateur football players and their coach has increased in parallel with the status of football players in their research. However, the result obtained from our study contrasts with this result found in the literature. It can be said that the reason for this is due to the differences in the region where the research was conducted. In Kayhan and Kızılet (2021) studies, there was a significant difference in the attachment styles of football players according to age, education level, playing time, playing level and working time with the current coach ($p < 0.05$); there was no significant difference according to the weekly training time variable ($p > 0.05$). It was observed that the sub-dimensions of the scale differed according to the variables and it was understood that these differences were concentrated in 3 sub-dimensions. As a result, it was seen that amateur football players were more connected with anxiety, football players who had less time to play sports were connected with avoidance and anxiety, and football players were connected with safety as the working time with their coaches increased. Accordingly, it is believed that the existing experiences are effective in connecting and that the athlete and coach should spend quality time together in order for the connection to occur. In this study, the factors affecting the attachment levels were determined and it was seen that these factors were important for successful athlete training.

Due to the results obtained, the following recommendations can be taken into account;

When the literature was examined, it was seen that there are very few studies investigating the levels of coach and athlete attachment in Turkey. Reproducing the studies to be carried out in this field with larger samples, presenting different results to the field paper, can enrich the literature. It will lead to the study of how much athletes' attachment styles affect their own perceptions and coaches' perceptions of relationship quality and psychological well-being indicators. Regarding the attachment experiences of athletes, it will be interesting to investigate how it affects their cognitive behavior, such as competitive anxiety, which is effective in athletic performance. In addition, longitudinal studies can help determine the role of coaches'/athletes' attachment styles in predicting changes in athletes'/coaches' perception of relationship quality and well-being over time and during transition periods (such as burnout, injury, etc.) (Zengin, 2019). Finally, the present study shows that communication and attachment are key factors to take in consideration, when developing and maintain successful and satisfactory relationships in sport contexts.

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