

Coaches' Perspectives about the Reasons behind Dropping Out of Sports in Wrestlers

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Abstract

It has been known that amateur or professional athletes quit competing because of personal and socio-economic reasons such as lack of financial, technical, or family support, and lack of motivation for a future career. Especially, it has been common in Turkish wrestling that many elite wrestlers quit competing at an early age. This research aims to determine the reasons why wrestlers quit the sport, according to coaches. A qualitative research method was used to conduct the study. The research population included 293 volunteer coaches who were active in sports clubs in fifty-one different cities in Turkey. Participating coaches consist of different experience levels, from beginner coaches to elite-level national head coaches. While descriptive statistics was used to determine the characteristics of the participants, the data was done through content analysis. The research data were obtained with four open-ended questions that were asked of the coaches. After the interview, the opinions of the coaches were written down based on the answers given to the questions. In this study, an example of the question, "Did any of your athletes quit wrestling?" was asked of 293 wrestling coaches. When the coaches were asked, "If your answer is yes, why do you think your athletes quit wrestling?" 173 (59.04%) out of 293 coaches stated that they quit wrestling due to future anxiety, 70 (23.89%) family, 30 (10.23%) disability, 17(5.80%) the coach, and 3(1.02%) friends. According to coaches, the main reason that wrestlers drop out of the sport is the concern about the future.

Keywords: Wrestling, Coaches, Reasons for dropout sports

1. Introduction

Sports is an activity that is often performed due to many more beneficial effects on an individual, such as having a healthy and fit body, staying away from bad habits, earning

money, and obtaining a social status (Niemi, 2023; Chang, 2020). In parallel, participating in sports is seen as an important activity, especially in childhood and adolescence, as it contributes to the physical and mental development of individuals at an early age, the socialization process, and self-esteem (Davis, 2021; Bailey et al., 2015). For this reason, many families encourage their children to do sports during their adolescence because it helps them to be healthy, make friends, enjoy, develop skills, and gain success/status and team spirit (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008). Despite the benefits of sports, excessive time consumption, the thought that the activities are not fun after a certain period, lack of team spirit, and diminishing interest in sports have led individuals to quit sports (Haralabos et al., 2016; Eliasson et al., 2021). Additionally, coach or administrator behaviors, injuries, discomforts arising from sports, lack of success, concern about the future, low perceived ability, lack of opportunities, difficulties, academic failure, and lack of interest in the family are other reasons for quitting sports (Sáez et al., 2021). There are many studies regarding the reasons for quitting sports. (Eliasson et al., 2021) found in their study of 62 swimmers between the ages of 14 and 30 who quit swimming, that not enjoying, failure or low perceived ability, and inadequate conditions related to success, play a significant role in quitting sports. In another study conducted by Andronikos et al. (2019), factors such as poor communication, insufficient support, inability to conduct school life together, excessive pressure, or being constantly focused on winning lead to quitting sports early before reaching the elite level. Many athletes are negatively affected by this condition.

Detailed investigation of the underlying reasons for quitting sports, identification, and finding solutions to these problems will contribute to the physical, psychological, and social development of athletes both getting sports and the process of continuing sports. Thus, these athletes will take their places among the promising future champion candidates. Despite this beneficial effect and promising future of sports, it is known that many individuals who participate in sports drop out sports (Young et al., 2006; Deelen et al., 2018). While children's participation in sports is at its highest point between 10 and 13 years. Unfortunately, there is a huge decrease in the age of starting sports until they reach the age of 18 years. It is predicted that more than one-third of all participants aged ten-seventeen quit sports practice annually, a significant percentage that represents several million youngsters across Europe and North America (Monteiro et al., 2017; Weinberg & Gould, 2019). It is claimed that if children younger than 12 years of age and children between the ages of 12 and 17 (90%) cannot win in sports, they quit for these reasons (Weinberg, 1999), showing the existing concern with the increasing number of athletes who drop out of sports practice (Weinberg & Gould, 2019). However, investigations related to social and psychological factors of sports dropout are scarce (Weiss & Amorose, 2008) and be crucial to understand the main reasons and/or determinants for sports dropout among youths. In Turkey, wrestling is the sport that has won the most medals at international championships. On the contrary, it is seen that participation in wrestling is relatively low and there is no necessary concern. Most of the available research has usually focused on the reasons for quitting sports athletes. Coaches are the best people to track the difficulties that athletes encounter when starting sports, and the process of quitting sports. If the reasons for quitting sports are evaluated from the perspective of coaches who train the athletes, it would provide the opportunity to look at this issue from a broader

perspective. Therefore, this research aims to determine the reasons why wrestlers quit the sport, according to wrestling coaches.

2. Method

The research population consisted of 293 volunteer coaches who are between the ages of 20-59, in which qualitative research method was used in 51 provinces in seven different regions of Turkey.

2.1 Data Collection Tool

While preparing the interview form, content analysis was performed and used in the creation of articles. The created draft form was asked of 4 academicians and 3 coaches who are experts in the field. The interview form was used as a data collection tool in the research. In the preparation of interview questions developed by experts; principles such as being clear, understandable, and easily answerable, as well as not being complex and guiding, have been paid attention to (Taylor et al., 2015). The online interview form was used to detect the coaches with the aim of easy access to the participant action, improving reliability, and saving time and money. Before the wrestling coaches were asked about the questionnaire form, the preliminary application was carried out and the necessary corrections were made by the recommendations of the experts and the final form of the questionnaire was given. The interview form consists of two parts: In the first part, regarding the coaches, “their age, educational status, coaching level, year and category, achievements of the athletes they train, etc.” included 8 questions that cover the topics.

In the second part, the coaches were asked “Did any of your athletes quit wrestling?” the question was asked, and then if your answer is yes, “What do you think are the reasons for your students who quit sports to quit sports?”, “What do you think should be the age to start wrestling?”, “What do you think should be done so that your athletes do not quit wrestling?” there are four questions that are asked open-ended in the form. The questions in the interview form were converted to writing after the coaches were asked.

2.2 The Method of the Research

In the research, it is important to determine the opinions, thoughts, experiences, expectations, and suggestions of coaches to find out the reasons for athletes quitting wrestling and situations related to their continuation in the sport. Therefore, we used the qualitative research method. In qualitative research; qualitative data collection methods are used, and perceptions and events in the natural environment realistically and holistically in which a qualitative process is followed (Cropley, 2015).

2.3 Analysis of the Data

In this study, which was planned in a descriptive model, the answers given by the coaches to the interview questions were transferred to a computer environment and converted into data. Frequency December and percentages of the data were calculated and interpreted, and the data were evaluated by content and descriptive analysis. Then, descriptive analysis was applied to the coaches’ answers to the questions in the interview form and the main themes

were determined. The data obtained were divided into categories and thematized.

3. Results

Table 1. The educational background of the coaches, the level of coaching, and the year

Education Background	f	Coaching Level	f	The Year of Coaching	f
Elementary	6	Assistant coach	40	1-2 years	18
High school	58	Basic coach	101	2-4 years	30
Associate	42	Senior coach	111	4-6 years	41
Undergraduate	168	Head coach	23	6-8 years	53
Graduate	19	Technical director	18	8-10 years	53
				12-14 years	35
				15 years and above	63

Table 2. National and international achievements of athletes who quit wrestling trained by coaches

Success Status	National and International Sports Achievements	F (%)
Success	Top three in the Turkish championship	111 (37.88%)
	Top three in Provincial/Regional Championships	75 (25.56%)
	Top three in the European Championship	12 (4.09%)
	Top three at the World Championships	5 (1.70)
	Top three in the Olympic games	2 (0.68%)
Total		205 (69.97%)
No Success	No success	88 (30.03%)
Grand Total		293 (100%)

According to Table 2, when the national and international achievements of the wrestlers who were trained by the coaches and quit wrestling are examined, 111 (37.88%) wrestlers are in the top three in the Turkish championship, 75 (25.56%) wrestlers are in the top three in the provincial/regional championships, 12 (4.09%) wrestlers are in the top three in the European championship, 5 (1.70%) wrestlers are in the top three in the world championship, and 2 (0.68%) wrestlers are in the top three at the Olympic games while 88 (30.03%) wrestlers have

not achieved any success. In addition, while the national and international successes of the athletes who quit wrestling trained by the coaches are 205 (70%), it is seen that the unsuccessful ones are 88 (30.03%).

Table 3. Frequency and percentage values for the age of starting sports

Starting Age	F	%
8 years	108	46.95
9 years	97	32.42
10 years	55	18.77
11 years	12	4.09
12 years	9	3.07
13 years	8	2.73
14 years	4	1.36
Total	293	100

According to Table 3, when coaches were asked “What should be the starting age for wrestling?” 108 (46.95%) of 293 coaches answered that it should be 8, 97 (32.42%) coaches answered that it should be 9, 55 (18.77%) coaches answered that it should be 10, 12 (4.09%) coaches answered that it should be 11, 9 (3.07%) coaches answered that it should be 12, 8 (2.73%) coaches answered that it should be 13 and 4 (1.36%) coaches answered that it should be 14.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage ranges of wrestlers’ duration of sports

The duration of the wrestlers to continue the sport	N	%
0-6 months	64	21.84
1-2 years	58	19.79
3-4 years	50	17.06
5-6 years	45	15.35
7-8 years	36	12.28
8-9 years	11	3.75
10 years and above	29	9.89
Total	293	100

According to Table 4, when coaches were asked “How long after starting sports did your wrestlers quit sports?”, 64 (21.84%) of 293 coaches said 0-6 months, 58 (19.79%) coaches said 1-2 years, 50 (17.06%) coaches said 3-4 years, 45 (15.35%) coaches said 5-6 years, 36 (12.28%) coaches said 7-8 years, 11 (3.75%) coaches said 8-9 years and 29 (9.89%) coaches said 10 years or more.

Table 5. Frequency and percentage values related to the reasons wrestlers quit the sport

Yes (n/%)		293 (%100)
Reasons For Wrestlers Quitting Sports	f	%
future anxiety	173	59.04
Family	70	23.89
Disability	30	10.23
Coach	17	5.80
Teammate	3	1.02
Total	293	100

According to Table 5, the question “Did any of your athletes quit wrestling?” was administered to 293 wrestling coaches in our study, and 293 (100%) trainers answered yes to this question. When the coaches were asked, “If your answer is yes, why do you think your athletes quit wrestling?” 173 (59.04%) out of 293 coaches stated that they quit wrestling due to future anxiety, 70 (23.89%) stated the reason as family, 30 (10.23%) stated the reason as disability, 17 (5.80%) stated the reason as the coach and 3 (1.02%) stated the reason as friends.

Table 6. The general and sub-themes were created according to the answers given by the coaches about the wrestlers’ continuation of sports

General themes	Sub-themes	f	%
Material and Spiritual Support	Economic support	80	27.30
	Family support	47	16.04
	Support of government	28	9.55
	Encouragement to sports	11	3.75
future anxiety	Relieving worries about the future	66	22.52
Coach	Have professional knowledge and competence	42	14.33
Athlete	Being patient and working hard	19	6.48

According to the coaches, if the wrestlers are provided with financial and moral support [economic support 80 (27.30%), family support 47 (16.04%), government support 28 (9.55%), and sports incentive 11 (3.75%)], if the wrestlers' concerns about the future are eliminated 66 (22.52%), if the coaches have professional knowledge and competence 42 (14.33%), and if the wrestlers are patient and work with determination 28 (9.55%), the wrestlers will continue to play sports.

3.1 Material Support and Moral Support

3.1.1 Economic Support

Most of the coaches [80 (27.30%)] stated that wrestlers would continue to play sports if there was economic support.

“He needs to continue the financial and moral support of his family and coaches” (A14). “... material, nutrition, and financial support should be provided as they achieve success, and correct directions should be made for educational life” (A26). It is necessary to inform families about children and provide financial support for adult athletes” (A58). “Considering the family structure of the wrestlers, they need financial support because they come from a place where the economic situation is not good. If financial support is provided, these problems will disappear, as families will send their children to wrestling” (A73). “If a good training hall, material and transportation facilities are provided, there will be continuity in the wrestling sport” (A126). “Financial resources should be provided and facility facilities should be provided. Jul.” (A138). “Material and moral support should be provided, the training hall of sufficient size, opportunities for the nutrition of athletes.” (A159). “... and the need for accommodation of wrestlers should be provided” (A207). “Scholarships should be attached to wrestlers” (A231). “A child who starts wrestling should be provided with nutrition, housing and a healthy sports environment. In addition, in order to practice wrestling, which is necessary for sports, clothes should be given, wrestling should be popularized, and most importantly, there should be continuity” (A292).

3.1.2 Family Support

The coaches emphasized that wrestlers will continue to play sports if family support [47 (16.04%)].

“Families should support children” (A47). “... to get full family support and to provide a safe environment at home” (A69). “Families should be supported, and coaches be interested” (A157). “Family and sports infrastructure should be given great importance to their” (A194). “Sports awareness should be instilled in families” (A201). “... an effective communication should be established to the family” (A218). “Communication with the family needs to be stronger” (A261). “Parents should make the child love sports first. Family, athlete, coach communication plays an important role in the wrestler’s continuation in sports.” (A269).

3.1.3 State Support

The coaches stated that if there is state support [28 (9.55%)], the wrestlers will continue to play sports.

“Barriers to students doing sports should be removed (... students should be encouraged to play sports, school and training hours should be adjusted)” (A21).

“Wrestling halls should be increased, material support should be provided, accommodation needs of athletes who do not have economic opportunities should be met” (A46). “Sports should be encouraged by branch teachers and service supports should be provided” (A97). “Making wrestling a compulsory course in Minister of National Education (MNE)” (A157). “Social assistance should be provided to the families of successful students in sports” (A179). “The proliferation of clubs, the holding of award-winning tournaments, athletes who have completed their year in athlete training centers (SEM) should be placed in the Turkish Olympic Preparation Center (TOHM)” (A221). “Support that encourages both the family and the athlete, such as insurance and salary, should be provided” (A256). “Wrestling news should be featured more frequently on state television” (A271).

3.1.4 Encouragement to Sports

The coaches stated that if sports are encouraged [11 (3.75%)], the wrestler will continue to play sports.

“The athlete should not be offended and the athlete should always be supported” (A73). “Athletes should be given priority when staffing clubs or government institutions” (A91). “The best incentive is money money money ... Municipalities (social assistance or governorship) should pay salaries to athletes according to the degree of success” (A154). “Athletes should receive scholarships as long as wrestling continues” (A191). “Athletes should be encouraged to wrestle, and opportunities should be improved” (A252).

3.1.5 Future Anxiety

According to the coaches, if the concerns about the future of wrestling are resolved [66 (22.52%)], it has been stated that wrestlers will not quit the sport, on the contrary, they will continue.

“Wrestlers should not have worries about the future, opportunities to be employed should be provided to them” (A14). “The family should be supported and, for children not to worry about the future, municipalities should provide serious support” (A31). “Promising wrestlers should be placed in centers with good social facilities, such as Wrestling Training Centers, SEM or TOHM” (A69). “The future should relieve anxiety, and the system that will be able to carry out the training, working, and sports life of wrestlers together should be installed” (A157). “Firstly, if wrestling is made popular and wrestlers’ worries about the future are addressed, will decrease the number of those who quit the wrestling. Clubs should be strengthened, studies should be carried out to eliminate future concerns. Studies to eliminate the future concerns of wrestlers should be

carried out” (A181). “There should be no future anxiety, there should be social security” (A201). “Wrestlers should be supported both educationally and financially without worrying about the future” (A218). “The number of clubs needs to increase. Future shouldn’t be of concern. There needs to be a sports policy. There should be better facilities” (A241). “... police school, military schools can continue their sports life under the guarantee of the state” (A284).

3.1.6 Coaches

According to the coaches, if the coaches have professional knowledge and competence [42 (14.33%)] wrestlers will be able to continue the sport for a longer period.

“It is necessary to work with experts and qualified coaches in the field” (A7). “It is important to have a sense of trust between the coach and the athlete” (A28). “Coaches should treat new children to sports very sincerely, without scaring them, and have fun game-weighted training. In addition, the coach should make the children love wrestling” (A76). “To make him love the sport he does, to tell him what he does it for, to approach children with love” (A103). “The coach should constantly communicate with the athlete’s parents” (A114). “Coaches should not overload beginners in training” (A149). “All difficulties that an athlete may face (including disability) should be shared with the family” (A187).

3.1.7 Athletes

According to the coaches, wrestlers will be able to succeed if they are patient and work with perseverance [28 (9.55%)]. This also shows that you will not have to quit wrestling.

“Wrestlers need to be patient and work with perseverance” (A36). “Beginners in sports should love their job, work hard, and be patient, etc. (A71). “Good work, good nutrition, good rest, and also patience” (A85). “One should set goals and pursue dreams” (A159). “Not to stop training instead of listening to the environment” (A211).

4. Discussion

In this study, the question “Did any of your athletes quit wrestling?” was asked to 293 wrestling coaches in our study, and 293 (100%) trainers answered yes to this question. When the coaches were asked, “If your answer is yes, why do you think your athletes quit wrestling?” 173 (59.04%) out of 293 coaches stated that they quit wrestling due to future anxiety, 70 (23.89%) stated the reason as family, 30 (10.23%) stated the reason as disability, 17(5.80%) stated the reason as the coach and 3(1.02%) stated the reason as friends. According to coaches, the main reason that wrestlers drop out of the sport is the concern about the future. It can be concluded that if coaches provide financial and emotional support (financial support, family support, government support, and encouragement) to wrestlers if wrestlers’ concerns about the future are eliminated if coaches are professionally competent, and if wrestlers are patient and work with determination and perseverance, then wrestlers will continue with the sport.

There are three basic forms of quitting: those who start and quit the sport, those who join and

quit, and those who pass and quit (Lindner et al., 1991; Kaynar, 2014). Those who have just started and quit sports are who aim to try sports and get rid of some negative habits and gain a social environment (Burton & Martens, 1986). These people can participate in one or more sports at a low, medium, and high level, but they leave the sport without making any serious progress in the sport. Active participants and quitters attend one or more sports branches for more than a year and continue to do so. Those in this group; spend time on sports at various levels and also those in this group can be classified as low, medium, and elite-level competitors. When the expectations and needs of the elite-level participants are not met, they are transferred to another sport. In some cases, transitioning athletes return to their old sports. However, this return generally remains at the recreational level (McCusker, 1989). A transitioning participant is someone who has switched to another sport because they are no longer satisfied with their previous sport and their needs are not being met. He/she may be more curious, inquisitive, and ambitious about the sport he/she transitioned to than the sport he/she did before (Kaynar, 2018). When the literature is examined; It is seen that they prefer to quit sports, due to chronological age, not being selected for the team, injury, and free choice (Lin et al., 2016), family reasons, problems with coaches or club managers, full-time school hours, economic difficulties (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993), health problems, financial conditions and anxiety of failure (Kaynar et al., 2021; Gölleroğlu, 2010). Alfermann (2004) states that although athletes voluntarily end their tennis life, they also have to quit sports because of age, injury, falling out of favor, and other special reasons. Yıldırım et al. (2023) reveals in a study conducted with 50 swimmers aged between 10 and 18 who quit the sport, the most important reasons for quitting the sport were put forward as “taking time for other things” and “changing interests”.

In another study examining the reasons for quitting sports, it was stated that children do not continue to play sports due to reasons such as excessive pressure, lack of entertainment, excessive time-wasting and conflict with the coach, and a change of interests and job responsibilities in later ages (Horn, 2008).

In another study, the biggest reason for adolescents to quit sports is due to the coach (Kayabaşı, 2015; Ryska et al., 2002) report that coaches, parents, teachers, and teammates play a role in quitting sports in their study on the adolescent group in Australia.

In a similar study, it was reported that the lack of support and pressure caused adolescents to quit sports (Thomas et al., 2018). When the reasons for quitting sports are examined; In the first five ranks, preparation for exams, inability to gain financial gain, absenteeism, failure, decrease in interest and desire, injury, and illness are observed respectively (Pehlivan, 2016).

Other studies, starting sports at an early age French basketball (Delorme et al., 2010) concluded that Turkish swimmers started sports at an early age and quit swimming because they could not spare enough time for entertainment and play due to being professional at an early age (Gölleroğlu, 2010).

The dislike of the coach, the perception of collapse and not having a team atmosphere in Spanish athletes (Molinero et al., 2003), perceptions of competition, coaches' perspectives, family expectations, and social care agents it is reported were effective in quitting goals. Craig and Joan (2000) argued on 169 athletes who quit the sports injury (26%), time conflict (18%)

and the expansion of the coach (16%) were the most important reasons for quitting the sport.

While it was determined in a study by (Kaynar et al., 2017), in which 220 Turkish wrestlers have examined the reasons for quitting the sport, 93 (42.27%) future anxiety, 43 (19.54%) disability status, 40 (18.18%) family, 20 (9.09%) coach, 7 (3.18%) teammates, 27 (12.27%) who did not quit sports. It was found that military service, marriage and family were effective in Norwegian athletes (Enoxen, 2011).

In our research, when the national and international successes of the athletes who quit wrestling trained by the coaches are examined, it is seen that 111 (37.88%) in the Turkish championship, 75 (25.56%) in the provincial/regional championships, 12 (4.09%) in the European championships, 5 (1.70%) in the world championships, 2 (0.68%) in the Olympic games. wrestlers are in the top three, while 88 (30.03%) wrestlers have not achieved any success. In addition, while the national and international successes of the athletes who quit wrestling trained by the coaches are 205 (70%), it is seen that the unsuccessful ones are 88 (30.03%).

It is quite remarkable that among those who quit wrestling in our research, there are wrestlers who have achieved many successes in national championships (provincial/regional and Turkish championships) and international championships in Europe, world, and Olympic championships. It is a very important research topic to reveal the reasons behind the quitting of wrestlers, who have achieved success, especially in international championships.

Another issue that draws attention in our research is the answers to the questions to the coaches' "What should be the age to start wrestling? Among these answers, the majority of the coaches suggested that wrestling should be started at the age of 8 year, 47%, 9 years, 18.77%, 10 years, 32.42%. However, in literature research, it is seen that the age to start wrestling is 11 years old (Kaynar, 2019), 13 years according to (Witt et al., 2018). According to the answers of the trainers in our study, the age of starting wrestling does not seem to be compatible with the literature data.

In our study, we asked the coaches, "How long after your wrestlers started sports did they quit?" and 293 trainers 64 (21.845%) replied 0-6 months, 58 (19.79%) 1-2 years, 50 (17.06%) 3-4 years, 45 (15.35%) 5-6 years, 36 (12.28%) 7-8 years, 11 (3.75%) 8-9 years and 29 (9.89%) 10 years or more. According to our research results, it is seen that the wrestlers quit the sport in the early period. It's seen that 80 (27.30%) wrestlers trained by coaches due to lack of financial support, 66 (22.52%) due to future concerns, 47 (16.04%) without family support, 42 (14.33%) due to coaches, 28 (9.55%) due to insufficient government support, 28 (9.55%) athletes giving up early and 11 (3.75%) quit sports because there was no incentive for sports. According to the coaches in our research results, eliminating the future anxiety of the wrestlers and eliminating the negative effect of the family on the athlete will reduce the reasons for the wrestlers to quit sports.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, according to the trainers, most wrestlers stated that they quit wrestling due to future concerns. In addition, the wrestlers left the sport due to reasons such as family, injury, trainer, and friend respectively, after the future anxiety. When the social status of the wrestlers

is examined, it is seen that their income status is not high in general, so they have future concerns. Considering that wrestling brings the most medals to our country in international championships, it is important to take measures to eliminate the future anxiety of wrestlers. In addition, families should support their children engaged in wrestling, qualified and experienced coaches should train wrestlers, more state support should be given, and projects should be developed to encourage individuals to participate in sports. All these mentioned above will help wrestlers to eliminate the reasons for quitting the sport. In addition, in our research, topics such as re-investigating the age of starting wrestling, determining the reasons for quitting wrestling at an early age, investigating in detail the reasons for the wrestlers who have achieved significant success to quit the sport, and re-examining the necessary precautions for the wrestlers to continue their sport can be listed as topics worth investigating.

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