

Study of The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Goal Commitment Levels in Athletes

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and goal commitment levels in athletes doing individual and team sports. The study group of the research consists of 427 licensed athletes who study at Sports Sciences Faculties of 6 universities in Aegean Region of Turkey in 2018-2019 academic year. In order to measure the level of goal commitment and emotional intelligence in athletes 'Emotional Intelligent Scale' and 'Goal Commitment Scale' were used in the current study. In order to find answers to the sub-problems of the study, t-Test, Pearson correlation coefficient analysis and Cohen's d analysis were used. The results obtained from the analyses revealed that the goal commitment and emotional intelligence mean scores of the female athletes doing individual or team sports are higher than those of the male athletes. Moreover, the mean scores of the athletes doing team sports were found to be higher than those of the athletes doing individual sports and the emotional intelligence mean score of the professional athletes doing individual sports was found to be higher than that of the amateur athletes. According to the results of the correlation analysis, there is a significant correlation between the goal commitment and emotional intelligence mean scores of both the athletes doing individual sports and the athletes doing team sports. As a conclusion, regardless of being engaged in an individual sport or a team sport, increasing emotional intelligence was found to be leading an increase in goal commitment in both of the groups. This positive correlation is believed to make important contributions to literature and academicians working in this field, coaches, conditioners and sports psychologists to achieve high level of achievement and performance.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Goal Commitment, League Status, Team, Individual.

Sporcularda Duygusal Zekâ ve Hedef Bağlılığı Düzeyleri Arasındaki İlişkinin Araştırılması

Öz

Çalışmanın amacı, sporcularda duygusal zeka ve hedef bağlılığı düzeyleri arasındaki ilişkinin araştırılmasıdır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu, 2018-2019 eğitim öğretim yılında Ege Bölgesi’nde bulunan 6 üniversitenin spor bilimleri fakültesi ‘nde öğrenim gören, aktif lisanslı olarak bireysel veya takım sporu yapan toplam 427 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Sporcularda duygusal zekâ ve hedef bağlılığı düzeyini ölçmek amacıyla araştırmada 'sporda duygusal zekâ envanteri' ve 'hedef bağlılığı ölçü' kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın problem cümlesi ve alt problemlerine cevap bulmak için t-testi, Pearson korelasyon katsayısı analizi ve Cohen d analizi kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen verilerden sonuçla, bireysel ve takım sporu yapan kadın sporcuların hedef bağlılığı ve duygusal zekâ puan ortalamaları, erkek sporculara göre yüksek çıkmıştır. Takım sporcularının, hedef bağlılığı düzeyi bireysel sporculara kıyasla daha yüksek olup, bireysel-profesyonel sporcuların ise amatör sporculara göre daha yüksek duygusal zekâya sahip olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Hem bireysel sporcuların hem de takım sporularının korelasyon analizine göre sporcuların hedefe bağlılıklarını ile duygusal zekâ puanları arasında anlamlı bir ilişkinin olduğu görülmektedir. Sonuç olarak sporcularda bireysel veya takım fark etmemesizin her bir grupta duygusal zekâ ile hedefe bağlılığın arttığı görülmekte olup, bu pozitif ilişkinin literatüre ve alanında uzman akademisyenlere araştırmalarda; Antrenör, kondisyoner ve spor psikologlarına yüksek başarı ve performans için önemli düzeyde katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Duygusal Zekâ, Hedef Bağlılığı, Lig Statüsü, Takım, Bireysel.

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INTRODUCTION

Emotional state of people has the power to change and influence the job they are doing or the course of an event. Controlling our feelings and using this control in favour of ourselves will bring us many gains in our business and social life. In many studies, it has been shown that emotions and moods help us increase our motivation and performance in complex mental tasks (Peter & Salovey, 1989) and lead to positive outcomes in the use of psychological abilities such as imagination at the individual level and self-talk (Devonport, 2009). In the sports psychology literature, which includes participatory and life modelling to increase self-sufficiency, goal commitment is strongly suggested (Garland & Barry, 1988). It is believed that goal commitment and the social-emotional state of the athlete are related and that it is effective in the training of qualified athletes and in the development of individual training plan for these athletes by their trainers. Locke and Latham (1991), the researchers having conducted the first study on goal commitment in the literature defined the term as “decisiveness to accomplish a goal”. When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that there are some studies investigating goal commitment in relation to some sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation). Jackson (1974) found that an individual having a strong need for achievement are very eager to achieve a goal and exhibit a strong persistence in this direction; Aube and Rousseau (2005) reported findings showing that team goal commitment has effects on the team performance and agility and Salim(2018) reported a negative and significant correlation between goal commitment and problem solving. It is seen that the relationship between emotional intelligence and goal commitment in the field of sports has not been adequately investigated. It is believed that the motivation created by goals for the individual provides guidance while addressing the concept of emotional intelligence in a broader perspective (KED, 2014). The concept of motivational intelligence was first defined by two psychologists; Salovey and Mayer (1990), as the skill of having control on one's own emotions. When the relevant literature is reviewed, it is seen that Sadri and Janani (2015) conducted a study on water polo players and swimmers and concluded that the swimmers have higher emotional intelligence; Taghizadeh and Shojaie (2012) conducted a study on professional athletes and found that there is a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and group harmony and Toros and Soylu (2018) concluded that female athletes have a higher emotional intelligence mean score than that of the male athletes. There are very few studies investigating the relationship between goal commitment and emotional intelligence. Jiang (2016) found that development of emotional intelligence resulted in a higher increase in the goal commitment of the male students compared to the female students. Salovey and Mayer (1990) concluded that emotionally more intelligent people are more effective in the accomplishment of goals. Therefore, there is a need to further analyze the relationship between goal commitment and emotional intelligence. Determination of the relationship between emotional intelligence and goal commitment can help train qualified athletes and prepare them physically and mentally before the training. It is believed to be of particular importance in terms of helping trainers, conditioners and sports psychologists, who are experts in directing athletes, to have more detailed information about athletes and thus, enable them to have higher achievements. The current study aimed to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and goal commitment in athletes attending a faculty of sports sciences and whether they vary depending on some variables (gender, league status, type of sports). In order to achieve this goal, the following question, which forms the basis of the research, is sought for

answers:

- Is there a significant relationship between the emotional intelligence and goal commitment of the athletes?

METHOD

Research Model

The current study is a descriptive study designed in the relational survey model to investigate the relationship between the goal commitment and emotional intelligence of the individual and team athletes and whether they vary significantly depending on some variables (Walliman, 2001).

Population and Sample

The study group of the current research is comprised of 427 athletes having an active sports license and attending faculties of sports science of six universities located in the Aegean Region of Turkey in 2018-2019 academic year. These athletes had been doing active licensed sports as amateur or professional athletes at least for one year and they voluntarily participated in the study. Students not having a sports licence were not included in the study.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from 427 athletes were entered into SPSS 22 statistical program package. The normality check of the dependent variables was performed by using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and they were found to be distributing normally. Therefore, in the testing of the relationships, Pearson Product-Moments Correlation Coefficient was used and in the paired comparisons, t-test was used and the significance level was set to be $\alpha=0.05$ (Büyüköztürk, 2017). In the statistical operations, the effect size was calculated with Cohen's d and the effects size in the current study were found to be low (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2015).

Data Collection

Emotional Intelligence Inventory in Sport: The emotional intelligence inventory in sport was developed by Lane, Devonport, Davies, Wilson, Meyer, Diehl, Thelwell and Weston (2009) and it was adapted to Turkish by Adiloğulları and Görgülü (2015). The inventory is five-point Likert scale consisted of 5 sub-dimensions and 19 items. Although the inventory has sub-dimensions, it can also be evaluated as a single-factor scale. In the current study, it was evaluated as a single-factor scale. There are no reverse-coded items in the scale and the score to be taken from the scale ranges from 19 to 90. Increasing scores indicate increasing level of emotional intelligence.

Goal Commitment Scale: The goal commitment scale was first developed by Hollenbeck, Williams and Klein (1989) as a nine-item scale and it was later revised by Wesson, Hollenbeck and Wright (2001) as a five-item scale. The scale has a single dimension and it is a five-point Likert scale. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Şenel and Yıldız (2016). The internal consistency reliability of the scale was calculated by using Cronbach Alpha. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.74. Thus, the scale can be argued to be reliable.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Results of the t-test on athletes' goal commitment and emotional intelligence depending on the type of sports

Variables	Type of Sports	N	\bar{X} (Mean)	SD	t	p	Cohen's d
Goal commitment	Individual	129	20.39	4.36	-2.18	0.03	-0.23
		273	21.29	3.62			
Emotional intelligence	Team	29	73.61	8.11	0.56	0.56	6
		273	73.11	8.24			

*p<.05

While the goal commitment mean score of the individual athletes' is higher than that of the score of team athletes, the emotional intelligence mean scores do not vary significantly depending on the type of sports.

Table 2. Results of the t-test on athletes' goal commitment and emotional intelligence depending on gender

Variables	Variables	Gender	N	\bar{X} (Mean)	SD	t	p	Cohen's d
Athletes doing individual sports	Goal commitment	Female	49	21.04	4.01	1.34	0.18	0.24
		Male	80	19.99	4.54			
	Emotional intelligence	Female	49	73.61	7.28	0.01	0.99	0
		Male	80	73.6	8.62			
Athletes doing team sports	Goal commitment	Female	134	21.44	3.43	1.6	0.11	0.17
		Male	268	20.78	4.09			
	Emotional intelligence	Female	134	73.89	7.63	1.08	0.28	0.11
		Male	268	72.96	8.45			

*p<.05

As can be seen in Table 2, the emotional intelligence and goal commitment of the athletes' both doing individual sports and team sports do not vary significantly depending on gender.

Table 3. Results of the t-test on athletes' goal commitment and emotional intelligence depending on league status

Variables	Variables	League Status	N	\bar{X} (Mean)	SD	t	p	Cohen's d
Athletes doing individual sports	Goal commitment	Amateur	80	20.25	3.98	-0.46	0.65	-0.08
		Professional	49	20.61	4.96			
	Emotional intelligence	Amateur	80	72.28	7.68	-2.42	0.02	-0.44
		Professional	49	75.78	8.4			
Athletes doing team sports	Goal commitment	Amateur	267	21.05	3.64	0.33	0.74	0.04
		Professional	135	20.91	4.35			
	Emotional intelligence	Amateur	267	72.88	7.94	-1.36	0.17	-0.14
		Professional	135	74.05	8.65			

*p<.05

As can be seen in Table 3, the mean scores of the individual-professional athletes (Mean: 75.78) are higher than those of the amateur athletes (Mean: 72.28) and this difference is statistically significant (t:-2.42, p<.05).

Table 4. Results of correlation analysis between goal commitment and emotional intelligence

Type of Sports	Variable	Variable	Pearson's r	p
All athletes	Goal Commitment	Emotional Intelligence	0.006***	0.001
Individual Athletes	Goal Commitment	Emotional Intelligence	0.20*	0.024
Team Athletes	Goal Commitment	Emotional Intelligence	0.18***	0.001

*p < .05, *** p < .001

It is seen that there is a weak and positive correlation between the goal commitment and emotional intelligence of all the athletes, individual athletes and team athletes. In each group, with increasing emotional intelligence, goal commitment seems to increase.

DISCUSSION

When goal commitment in athletes doing team sports was examined in relation to some variables, important results were obtained. In similar studies, it has been reported that goal commitment of the athletes doing team sports is higher than that of the athletes doing individual sports. Akelaitis and Malinauskas (2018) stated that the athletes doing individual sports have more developed affective skills than the athletes doing individual sports. Some other studies in the literature also support this finding (Aube & Rousseau, 2005; Weldon & Weingart, 1993; Locke, Shaw, Saari & Latham, 1981).

As a result of the investigation of the emotional intelligence and goal commitment mean scores, it was found that both the emotional intelligence mean scores and goal commitment mean scores of the female athletes doing both individual and team sports were found to be higher than those of the male athletes. Salman, Toros and Soylu (2018) reported that the emotional intelligence mean score of the female athletes is higher than that of the male athletes, which concurs with the finding of the current study.

The general emotional intelligence of the athletes both doing individual sports and team sports was found to be not varying significantly depending on gender. Salman, Toros and Soylu (2018) and Tok (2008) also found that emotional intelligence does not vary significantly depending on gender.

The emotional intelligence mean score of the professional athletes doing individual sports was found to be higher than that of the amateur athletes doing individual sports and this difference is statistically significant. In the literature, there is no study supporting this finding in the literature but Sadri and Janani (2015) found that swimmers have higher emotional intelligence than water polo players.

It was found that there are significant correlations between the goal commitment and emotional intelligence of all the athletes, of the athletes doing individual sports and of the athletes doing team sports. In each group, with increasing emotional intelligence, goal commitment seems to increase. One of the determiners of the emotional intelligence is motivation (Civanoglu, 2015) and goals are a source of motivation (KED, 2014); thus, a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and goal commitment seems to be natural.

In the current study, it was also found that the emotional intelligence of the individual-professional athletes is higher than that of the individual-amateur athletes, which can be because they receive emotional, mental and physical support individually and professionally. On the basis of this finding, it can be argued that with increasing level of emotional intelligence in individuals, their performance-related skills also develop and by obtained more detailed information about the life style and training program of individual-professional athletes, better conclusions can be reached.

The participating athletes' emotional intelligence and goal commitment were found to be changing significantly depending on gender. There can be various reasons to explain this finding: by their nature, females have better self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and more developed skills to establish social relationships. Moreover, because of the social roles, females need to have higher emotional intelligence and goal commitment to be successful and have higher status in the field of sports as in every field.

Another finding of the current study is that the individual-professional athletes have higher emotional intelligence than the amateur athletes and this is believed to be because of the training methods they are subjected to and professional support provided by more professional trainers and sports psychologists.

According to another finding of the study, athletes in team sports are more likely to be committed to individual athletes; this group shows positive effects on social relationships and communication, group work, motivation, and commitment.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

There is no study in the literature directly focusing on the relationship between the emotional intelligence and goal commitment of the athletes both doing individual sports and team sports; yet, there are some studies investigating the relations between these two variables and motivation (Civanoglu, 2015; KED, 2014) and performance (Klein & Wright, 1994) and they reported strong relationships.

As a result, it is seen that doing team sports has contributed to athletes' sustained commitment and individual-professional sports positively benefit athletes' emotional intelligence. Also, based on the data obtained, it can be said that there is a positive relationship between athletes' general goal commitment and their emotional intelligence.

Based on the results of the study, below are suggestions on some important points related to the research:

1. By conducting research on the sports participation of the other age groups apart from young athletes (aged 18-23) doing individual and team sports, sports participation of these age groups can be increased.
2. More comprehensive and detailed studies can be conducted in relation to the reasons why the emotional intelligence and goal commitment mean scores of the female athletes are higher than those of the male athletes.
3. The positive correlation between emotional intelligence and goal commitment is believed to make important contributions to literature and academicians working in this field, coaches, conditioners and sports psychologists to obtain high level of achievement and performance.

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