

**THE EMPATHY LEVELS OF WOMEN PLAYING IN BASKETBALL LEAGUES
AND THE LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS OF THEIR COACHES***

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the basketball players', active in Turkey Women's Basketball Super and 1st Leagues, empathy levels according to their marital status, educational status in addition to age and marital status of their coach; and to evaluate leadership characteristics and behavior of their coaches according to athlete's perception. Another aim was to analyze the relation between empathy levels of the athletes and athletes' perception of coaching behavior. 264 (age; 24.61±5.53 year) female athletes playing in Turkey Women's Basketball Super and 1st Leagues participated in this study. Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS)-version of Athletes' Perception of Coaching Behavior that developed by Chelladurai and Saleh, and adapted by Tiryaki and Toros in 2006 was used as data collection tool. Athletes' perceptions of leadership style and behavior of their coach were evaluated in five different factors. A five-factor solution with 40 items describing the most salient dimensions of coaching behavior was selected as the most meaningful. Empathy levels of the athletes were determined by using Emphatic Tendency Scale which was developed by Dökmen (1988) and composed of 20 items. Empathy levels of the athletes showed no statistically significant difference in terms of any variable ($p>0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference in athletes' perceptions of coaching behaviors in terms of marital status of the athlete and age of their coach ($p>0.05$). In terms of educational status of athletes and marital status of their coach, there were statistically significant differences in athletes' perceptions of coaching behaviors ($p<0.05$ and $p<0.01$). Positive and meaningful correlation was found between empathy scores of the athletes and training and instruction behavior ($r=.172^{**}$) and autocratic behavior ($r=.154^{*}$) of the coach ($p<0.05$ and $p<0.01$). Educational status of the athletes and marital status of their coach are influential in athletes' evaluation of their perceptions of coaching behavior. Empathy levels of the athletes are related to their perceptions of coaching behavior.

Keywords: Basketball; Empathy; Leadership

1. INTRODUCTION

As an essential part of the modern education, sport has become effective in participation to sport activities, improving helping culture in children and developing cooperation skills (Balçioğlu, 2003). When helping is considered, one of the primary concepts comes to mind is empathy. As in sport's definition, it is also hard to reach a universal agreement on definition of empathy. According to Tarhan (2011), empathy in Turkish culture is a concept in which one is concerned about others, feels their sorrow and acts upon their own favors. But recently, empathy has commenced to be studied academically as 'knowing others feelings' in cognitive

perspective and ‘social mental bonding’ in socio-cognitive perspective (Dökmen, 2005). Moreover, Bellous (2001) and Vincent (2002) referred to the influences of the empathy in addition to its definition; they suggested that people who have emphatic tendency can easily take part in other people’s life, become a reliable friends in their life and have the ability to understand them correctly. Thus, the people who are in touch with empathic people feel more comfortable in their reciprocal communication (Vincent, 2002).

Basketball, played for the first time in a high school gymnasium in United States, has evolved into an instrument in which people combine entertainment and sport through its spreading among students at first and public later on. However basketball is a team sport, it also includes some individual moves. Team play results from the combination and harmony of the individual moves. In basketball, athletes’ attitudes of understanding and compatibility with each other besides sense of helping are the key factors for success. Keeping compatibility and togetherness feeling alive among the team players both in court and their social life are essential for team success. Therefore, communication and empathy levels of the team members are also important (Kabasakal and Şahan, 2009).

To succeed in sports, just having a bunch of good players is not enough for the teams. It is required to have leaders with the competence who can guide the good athletes wisely and help them to reveal their skills. So, no doubt the coaches need to have leadership characteristics. If the leadership is to be admitted as a process of manipulating the individuals towards a set of certain goals, this process of manipulating can only be achieved by good communication between leaders and athletes in sports.

When considered the empathy and some achievements of the sport over individual and society; both can be said to improve and corroborate some concepts like tolerance, personal development, understanding other people, socialization, effective communication, endeavor of the people to understand each other and consensus.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the empathy levels of the female athletes, playing in basketball leagues, with regard to the leadership characteristics of their coaches. Therefore, athletes’ perceptions of leadership characteristics related to their coaches were compared in terms of certain variables, and relationship between emphatic tendencies and perceptions of the athletes were investigated.

2. METHOD

Turkish female basketball players playing actively in Turkey Women’s Basketball Super and 1st Leagues comprised the population of this study. In addition to this, the sample of the study composed of 264 licensed basketball players (age; 24.61 ± 5.53 year) playing in Turkey Women’s Basketball Super and 1st Leagues, in 2018-2019 season.

This study was performed in accordance with the Ondokuz Mayıs University Clinical Research Ethics Commission decision dated 26/07/2018 and numbered B.30.2.ODM.0.20.08/1819 and athletes participated in the study voluntarily.

2.1 Personal Information Form

Personal information form was prepared by researcher. The questions in the form were responded by the participants in order to determine the chronological age, educational status, marital status, age distribution of current coach and marital status of the current coach. Sport Leadership Scale and Emphatic Tendency Scale were applied to the participants by researcher in training facility.

2.2. Sport Leadership Scale

Sport Leadership Scale used in this study -version of athletes' perception of coaching behavior- was developed by Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) in order to evaluate athletes' perceptions about their coach's leadership styles and behaviors in five subscales. Adaptation of the scale for Turkish athletes was made by Tiryaki and Toros (2006). Sport Leadership Scale is a five point likert scale made up of 40 items which is administered to the athletes for finding out which coaching behaviors that defined in scale their coaches match with. There are five subscales as Training and Instruction, Democratic Behavior, Autocratic Behavior, Social Support and Positive Feedback. Scores (always, often, occasionally, seldom, never) represent the behavior style exhibited by athlete's coach.

2.3. Emphatic Tendency Scale

Emphatic Tendency Scale made up of 20 items was developed by Dökmen (1988). In Dökmen's study, coefficient was found 0.82. In the administration of the scale, participants were asked to respond the items so as to determine in what extent they agree with the view, by marking a number options from 1 to 5 (5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neutral, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree).

2.4. Statistical Analysis

In a result of power analysis for sample size, 240 athletes were found to be enough with the %95 of confidence limit and 80% of testing power, and our study was performed with 264 athletes. The data were analyzed by using SPSS Statistics 23.00. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed to figure out if the data show normal distribution. Because the data did not show normal distribution; Mann Whitney U test for paired comparisons and Kruskal Wallis test for multiple group comparisons were used for statistical analysis. Relationship between Empathy Levels of the Athletes and their perceptions of Leadership Characteristics of their Coaches were tested by correlation analysis and significance level was considered as 0.05.

3. RESULTS

According to the demographic information at the last stage; data related to empathic tendency levels of the participants, leadership behaviors of the coaches and the relationship between them were given with the tables.

Table 1. Empathic tendencies and perceptions of coaching behavior of the athletes in terms of their marital status

	Marital Status	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney-U	P
Empathic Tendency	Married	16	129.03	1928.500	.851
	Single	248	132.72		
Training and Instruction	Married	16	136.81	1915.000	.815
	Single	248	132.22		
Democratic Behavior	Married	16	134.59	1950.500	.910
	Single	248	132.36		
Autocratic Behavior	Married	16	142.03	1831.500	.604
	Single	248	131.89		
Social Support	Married	16	116.25	1724.000	.378
	Single	248	133.55		
Positive Feedback	Married	16	158.59	1566.500	.157
	Single	248	130.82		

Athletes' empathic tendency levels according to their marital status variable showed no difference when Table 1 was examined.

There was no statistically significant difference in training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support and positive feedback with respect to the marital status of athletes ($p > 0.05$).

Table 2. Empathic tendencies and the perceptions of coaching behavior of the athletes in terms of their educational status

	Educational Status	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney-U	P
Empathic Tendency	High School	64	119.48	5567.000	.116
	University	200	136.67		
Training and Instruction	High School	64	133.41	6341.500	.912
	University	200	132.21		
Democratic Behavior	High School	64	136.80	6124.500	.603
	University	200	131.12		
Autocratic Behavior	High School	64	123.02	5793.500	.251
	University	200	135.53		
Social Support	High School	64	142.02	5791.000	.251
	University	200	129.46		

Positive Feedback	High School	64	151.63	5176.000	.021*
	University	200	126.38		

*p<0.05

No statistically significant difference was found in emphatic tendency levels of the athletes with respect to their educational status ($p>0.05$).

There was no statistically significant difference in training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support and positive feedback of the athletes' perceptions with respect to the educational status variable ($p>0.05$).

There was a difference in positive feedback subscale according to the educational status of the athletes. Perception of positive feedback in coaching behavior was higher in high school graduates compared to university graduates ($p<0.05$).

Table 3. Empathic tendencies of the athletes and athletes' perceptions of coaching behavior in terms of age of their coach.

	Coach Age	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney-U	P
Empathic Tendency	20 to 40	114	136.06	8144.000	.508
	41 and above	150	129.79		
Training and Instruction	20 to 40	114	137.93	7931.000	.313
	41 and above	150	128.37		
Democratic Behavior	20 to 40	114	141.68	7503.500	.088
	41 and above	150	125.52		
Autocratic Behavior	20 to 40	114	135.21	8241.500	.614
	41 and above	150	130.44		
Social Support	20 to 40	114	142.74	7382.500	.057
	41 and above	150	124.72		
Positive Feedback	20 to 40	114	141.38	7538.000	.098
	41 and above	150	125.75		

Female athletes' empathic tendency levels who participated in this study showed no significant difference regarding the age of their coach ($p>0.05$)

When considering athletes' perceptions of coaching behavior according to the age of their coach, there was no significant difference for average scores depending on the age of coach in training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support and positive feedback ($p>0.05$).

Table 4. Empathic tendencies of the athletes and athletes' perceptions of coaching behavior in terms of marital status of the coach

	Coach Marital Status	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney-U	P
Empathic Tendency	Married	176	132.74	7702.500	.943
	Single	88	132.03		
Training and Instruction	Married	176	124.71	6372.500	.019*
	Single	88	148.09		
Democratic Behavior	Married	176	124.53	6340.500	.016*
	Single	88	148.45		
Autocratic Behavior	Married	176	131.57	7579.500	.777
	Single	88	134.37		
Social Support	Married	176	131.19	7513.000	.692
	Single	88	135.13		
Positive Feedback	Married	176	129.50	7215.500	.364
	Single	88	138.51		

*p<0.05

No statistically significant difference was discovered in empathic tendency levels of the athletes with respect to marital status of the coach ($p>0.05$).

When examined the athletes' perceptions of coaching behavior according to marital status of the coaches; average scores in Autocratic Behavior, Social Support and Positive Feedback subscales showed no significant difference ($p>0.05$).

Considering Table 4, statistically significant difference was indicated in training and instruction and democratic behavior subscales of the athletes' perceptions of the coaching behavior with respect to marital status of the coach ($p<0.05$). According to the athletes; single coaches had higher level of leadership characteristics in training and instruction and democratic behavior subscales.

Table 5. Relationship between empathic tendency of the athletes and athletes' perceptions of coaching behavior

	Empathic Tendency	Training and Instruction	Democratic Behavior	Autocratic Behavior	Social Support	Positive Feedback
Empathic Tendency	r	1.000	.172**	.034	.154*	.020
	p	.	.005	.584	.012	.743

Training and Instruction	r	1.000	.045	.023	.011	.212**
	p	.	.463	.705	.861	.001
Democratic Behavior	r		1.000	.145*	.180**	.204**
	p		.	.018	.003	.001
Autocratic Behavior	r			1.000	.071	.115
	p			.	.249	.062
Social Support	r				1.000	.275**
	p				.	.000
Positive Feedback	r					1.000
	p					.
	n	264	264	264	264	264

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

When examined Table 5, there was a positive and meaningful correlation between emphatic tendency levels of the athletes and, training and instruction ($r=.172^{**}$) and autocratic ($r=.154^{*}$) coaching behaviors ($p<0.05$ and $p<0.01$).

4. DISCUSSION

In this study, female basketball players playing in Turkey Women's Basketball Super and 1st Leagues were assessed by their marital status, their educational status, empathy levels of them according to age and marital status of their coach, and leadership style and behavior of the coach according to their perceptions.

Empathy levels of the athletes showed no difference in terms of their marital status. Athletes were noted to perceive no significant difference in training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support and positive feedback coaching behaviors. Bakan (2008) reported in his study that statistically significant relationship could not be found between leadership styles and age and marital status, which were demographic factors.

No statistically significant difference was recorded in emphatic tendency levels of female athletes in terms of their educational status. It was not suggested any statistically significant difference for training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior and social support subscales in female athletes' perceptions of coaching behavior according to their educational status. But, difference was discovered in positive feedback subscale with regard to athletes' educational status. High school graduate athletes' perceptions of positive feedback were higher than university graduates. Similarly, in his study, Tozoğlu (2018) concluded that there was a significant difference between educational levels of the Physical Education and Sports teachers according to their scores obtained from leadership scale.

Empathic tendency levels of the female participants displayed no significant difference depending on their coach's age. When analyzing the athletes' perceptions of coaching

behavior in terms of coach's age; average scores of training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support and positive feedback did not demonstrate any difference depending on coach's age. Erkmen (2007) investigated the relationship between empathic tendencies and preferred leadership behaviors in sport by analyzing the students who studied in Selçuk University School of Physical Education and Sports. Similar to the results of our study, it was not seen any difference between empathic tendency score and preferred leadership behavior subscales in terms of age variable.

Empathic tendency levels of the female participants exhibited no significant difference depending on their coach's marital status. When considering athletes' perceptions of coaching behavior in terms of coach's marital status; autocratic behavior, social support and positive feedback subscales average scores showed no difference. But statistically significant difference was found in training and instruction, and democratic behavior subscales with respect to the coach's marital status. According to the athletes; single coaches had higher level in training and instruction, and democratic behavior subscales. In Karayol's (2013) study conducted with male athletes engaging in outdoor sports, a significant difference was identified between leadership behavior scores in being role model variable according to the athlete's marital status, whereas researcher did not report any difference in supporting in struggle, instructive behavior, democratic decision, group interaction, risk management and environmental awareness variables.

Positive and meaningful correlation was found between emphatic tendency levels of the athletes and, training and instruction ($r=.172^{**}$) and autocratic ($r=.154^{*}$) coaching behaviors. No significant difference was discovered between empathic tendencies of the athletes and, democratic behavior, positive feedback and social support subscales ($p>0.05$). Moderate positive correlation ($r=.212^{**}$) between training and instruction and positive feedback, low positive correlation between democratic behavior and autocratic behavior, moderate positive correlation between social support ($r=.180^{**}$) and positive feedback ($r=.204^{**}$) were calculated by researcher. A positive correlation ($r=.275^{**}$) was found between social support and positive feedback. Erkmen (2007), in above mentioned study performed with the Selçuk University School of Physical Education and Sports students in order to determine the relation between empathic tendency and preferred leader behavior, pointed out a positive correlation between empathic tendency and social support, positive feedback, training and instruction which were subscales of the preferred leadership behavior.

Consequently, educational status of the athletes and marital status of the coaches have an important role in athletes' perceptions of coaching behaviors. Empathy levels of the athletes and their perceptions of coaching behavior are related to each other.

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