INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL of IJSETS SPORT, EXERCISE & TRAINING SCIENCES

e-ISSN 2149-8229 **Vol** 7, **Issue** 4, 155–162, (2021) ***Original Article***

http://dergipark.gov.tr/useeabd

The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Self-Confidence: The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence: A Study in Elite Athletes

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Abstract

Aim: Emotional intelligence has been examined as a critical performance determinant in sports psychology. Besides, self-efficacy and self-confidence are seen as vital constructs to promote athlete performance. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the role of emotional intelligence between self-efficacy and self-confidence in team sports.

Methods: Elite team athletes, including baseball, volleyball, and football, were recruited for the study group. Research data was collected with emotional intelligence inventory in sports questionnaire, general self-efficacy scale, and self-confidence scale. In addition, data were analyzed with mediation analysis. The model hypothesized, indicating that emotional intelligence was a mediator between self-efficacy and self-confidence.

Results: The results showed that emotional intelligence had a mediator role between self-efficacy and self-confidence. Result revealed the positive effect of self-efficacy on self-confidence. Increasing self-efficacy provides team athletes with a high level of emotional intelligence, leading them to have increased self-confidence.

Conclusion: This study provides significant evidence to expand our knowledge on the role of emotional intelligence in team sports, explaining how self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and self-confidence are associated.

Keywords
Team athletes,
Social cognitive theory,
Team performance.

Article Info
Received: 16.09.2021
Accepted: 03.12.2021
Online Published: 15.12.2021

DOI:10.18826/useeabd.996027

INTRODUCTION

Sports psychology is seen as a broad field providing a natural environment for examining different parameters such as performance interaction with emotions and thoughts (Singh et al., 2009). As a result of the increasing competition in sports performed at the professional level, it caused the athletes to push themselves more and improve their parameters. Professional sports involve technical, tactical, physical, and psychological skills (self-efficacy, self-confidence, concentration, stress management, emotional management). These concepts, having an interrelated relationship in the sports environment, are the basis for understanding and improving athlete performance (Martin, 1982). Many studies in different disciplines have investigated psychological factors that affect an athlete's performance (Brown and Fletcher, 2017; Swann et al., 2017). Mostly, there is an increasing interest in the interaction and relations between the studies in the field of sports psychology, such as motivation, self-efficacy, competition anxiety, emotional intelligence, emotional state, and self-efficacy (Reagial et al., 2020; Sklett, Loras and Sigmundsson, 2018; Taylor, Brinthaupt and Pennington, 2018; Walter et al., 2019).

One of the critical concepts that affect performance is self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's belief in producing designed performance levels that impact events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy belief is related to people's belief in their functionality and abilities to control the events that affect their lives (Bandura,1994). Self-efficacy is an essential determinant of how individuals organize their thoughts and behaviors. Self-efficacy is also defined as the self-regulation of the ability in social cognitive theory. According to social cognitive theory, people can develop self-efficacy by observing patterns of colleagues who achieved essential goals and making numerous successful attempts in the past to achieve challenging goals. People with high self-efficacy and high self-confidence can achieve success in challenging tasks, observing their own and others' experiences while achieving essential goals. (Balck J ve ark, 2018). Self-efficacy theory feeds from four sources; *performance achievements*, *indirect experiences*, *verbal persuasion*, and *emotional stimulation*.

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Performance successes: the most effective way to create a strong sense of competence is through ingenious experiences. Achievements build a very firm belief in one's competence. When failure occurs before a sense of competence is firmly established, failures weaken the sense of self-efficacy. Strong endurance contributes to performance success. (Bandura, 1994). The second way to build and strengthen the self-beliefs of competence is through indirect experience from social models. Seeing that people with similar characteristics succeed through constant effort increases observers' belief that they can overcome similar activities to succeed. (Bandura,1994). Verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1977), one of the components of self-efficacy, especially in the sports environment, is related to discourse the coaches use to affect the athletes. With verbal persuasion, the athlete's self-efficacy beliefs are positively or negatively affected. The last source of self-efficacy is the emotional state. Stressful and challenging situations often reveal emotional arousal, which, depending on the situation, can have informative value regarding personal efficacy. Moreover, emotional arousal is another component of information that can affect perceived self-efficacy in dealing with threatening situations (Bandura, 1977). Besides, Chrysidis et al. (2020) state that the Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) application increases self-efficacy.

Self-confidence is another significant feature as a determinant of sports performance as well as self-efficacy. Looking at some definitions of self-confidence in the literature, Mahoney and Chapman (2004) defined self-confidence as a person's ability to succeed or the general mood of competence. Weinberg and Gould (2003) described an individual's belief in performing a behavior expected or desired. Vealey (2004) defined it as the belief that causes the individual to act and act by their partial capacities and abilities. However, Vealey (2004) defines self-confidence in the sports environment as the degree of belief in the athlete's ability to overcome setbacks and problems, quickly recover after poor performance and focus on mistakes, and focus on winning when he fails to win. Thomas, Lane, and Kingston (2011) defined it as showing resistance and endurance to the psychological and environmental challenges in competitive sports and maintaining this positive belief. Studies have been conducted on the relationship between self-confidence and many emotion-based parameters. Covassin and Pero (2004) reported the relationship between anxiety, mood, and self-confidence in young tennis players. Mowlaie et al. (2011) conducted a study with 246 athletes and found that self-confidence and sports self-efficacy mediate the relationship between anger, control dimensions, and sports performance. Woodman et al. (2010) examined the effect of self-doubt on performance and self-confidence on the linear relationship between self-confidence and performance.

The relationship between stress, anxiety, self-confidence, and performance attracts much research attention (e.g., Beilock & Gray, 2007; Woodman & Hardy, 2001). Among the least disputed of these relationships is the positive association between self-confidence and performance. The support for this positive relationship is strong both theoretically and empirically (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Bandura & Locke, 2003; Martens, Vealey, & Burton, 1990; Vealey,1986, 2001; Woodman & Hardy, 2003). Furthermore, meta-analyses of the self-confidence and performance relationship show that the mean effect size is more significant than that revealed for cognitive anxiety. Many studies report a positive relationship between self-confidence and performance (e.g., 89% of the exact effect sizes reported in Woodman & Hardy, 2003 were positive).

Studies explained the relationships between self-efficacy, self-confidence, and emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is seen as an essential predictor of sports performance. There are many different definitions of emotional intelligence in the literature. However, in Peter Salovey and John Mayer's first definition in 1990, emotional intelligence was defined as the ability to observe and regulate the emotions of oneself and others and use emotions to guide thought and behavior (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). All theories and models in the conceptualization of emotional intelligence fall under the umbrella of three primary lines of thought: the trait approach, the ability approach, and the mixed approach. These are models proposed by Mayer and Salovey, Bar-on, and Goleman. Each of its theoretical frameworks treats emotional intelligence in two forms, either as a pure form of intelligence consisting of mental abilities (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) or as a mixed intelligence comprised of cognitive skills and personality traits such as optimism, adaptability, and well-being (Dhania & Sharma, 2018).

Many studies have focused on the critical role of emotions in sports (Hanin, 2007; Botterill & Brown, 2002; Jones, 2003). Emotions can change during performance, and athletes can experience positive and negative emotions during this fluctuation (Jones 2003). While Botterill and Brown (2002) stated that athletes should think critically about their emotional experiences in reviewing the effects of emotions on sports performance, Hanin (2007) said that emotions should be recognized and managed.

This situation is in a compact structure with emotional intelligence. In this context, the correlation between the emotional intelligence levels of athletes and performance (Parker et al., 2004) has led to a further increase in interest in the concept of emotional intelligence. Emotional Intelligence studies such as cricket (Combie et al., 2009), hockey (Perlini and Halverson, 2006), baseball (Zizzi et al., 2003) revealed that higher efficacy perception in emotional intelligence plays an essential role in higher performance. Adilogullari, Gorgulu, and Senel (2015) showed a positive relationship between communication skills and efficacy perception of emotional intelligence, while Hwan, Feltz, and Lee (2013) reported a positive relationship between efficacy in coaching and motivation and emotional intelligence of basketball coaches. Gong et al. (2017) examined the relationship between perfectionism and emotional intelligence.

A more direct investigation of psychological skill usage among athletes found that higher scores on components of trait EI were related to more frequent use of self-talk, imagery, emotional control, goal setting, activation, and relaxation techniques in practice and competition (Lane et al., 2009). However, emotional intelligence is associated with many other psychological skills (self-talk, emotional control, goal-setting, relaxation techniques) (Lane et al., 2009). Laborde et al. (2012) found a high level of correlation between task-focused coping strategies (task-focused coping is often described as the most effective coping style for successful athletic performance) and emotional intelligence (in the trait model). Moreover, Çolakoğlu et al. (2013) examined the relationship between EI perception, self-efficacy, and self-confidence of athletes doing racket sports. They found a positive relationship between EI and self-efficacy and self-confidence in their study. Especially in sport, there are two main approaches to the study of confidence: self-confidence and self-efficacy. Self-confidence, a general term and most often measured as trait sport confidence, refers to an athlete's certainty about their ability to be successful in sport (Vealey, 1986). Bandura suggests that people's emotional states influence self-efficacy. So, if an athlete can control their emotional state, this will lead to greater perceived control in coping under stressful conditions. Considering that emotional intelligence is also effective in overseeing and managing emotions, it can be thought that athletes with high emotional intelligence can help them have more control over their beliefs and feelings. If athletes can organize their thoughts, their self-efficacy can also increase.

A limited number of studies examine the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and self-confidence in athletes doing team sports. The efficacy perception in emotional intelligence, self-confidence, and self-efficacy are interrelated and have a reciprocal relationship. This study provides critical evidence on the mediator role of emotional intelligence between the relations of self-efficacy and self-confidence in team sports.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Research Model

General survey model was used in this study, which is considered among the quantitative research approaches. To make a general judgment, a study group was determined from a universe consisting of team athletes.

Participants

449 Elite team athletes, including baseball (n=150), volleyball (n=150), and football (n=149), consist of the study group (310 males and 139 females). Athletes' age means were 23,77±3,89, with an experience of 3,45±0,81.

Measurements

Research data was collected with the 18-item "Emotional Intelligence Inventory in Sports" questionnaire adapted to Turkish by Adiloğulları and Görgülü (2015), two sub-dimensions Self-Confidence Scale developed by Akın (2007) and the General Self-Efficacy Scale adapted to Turkish by Aypay (2010).

Emotional Intelligence Inventory in Sport (EIS): The emotional intelligence scale developed by Schutte et al. (1998) was adapted for athletes by Lane et al. (2009). The inventory was five-dimension and 19 items. The inventory was to the Turkish version adopted by Adilogullari and Görgülü (2015). The inventory was five-dimension and 18 items. The inventory sun-dimensions are an *appraisal of others' emotions (4 items), Appraisal of own emotions (3 items), emotional regulation (2 items), social skills (3 items), and use of emotions (6 items).* The original study reported alpha scores ranging from 0,69 (Appraisal of others' emotions), 0,85 (Appraisal of own emotions), 0,67 (Emotional regulation) 0,85 (Use of emotions) and 0,61 (Social skills). In this study, alpha scores were acceptable for Appraisal

of others' emotions (0,71), Appraisal of own emotions (0,76), Emotional regulation (0,52), Use of emotions (0,80), and Social skills (0,62).

Self-Confidence Scale: In terms of theoretical framework, the scale developed by Akın (2007) based on Bandura's self-efficacy theory is a 33-item (17 items for internal self-confidence and 16 items for external self-confidence) 5-point Likert-type scale. The scale has two sub-scales including internal self-confidence (a=0,83) and external self-confidence (0,85). In this study, alpha coefficients were 0,86 for both external and internal self-confidence sub-scales.

General Self Efficacy (GSE): Schwarzer & Jerusalem (1995) developed the General Self Efficacy Scale (a=0,83) and was adapted to the Turkish version by Aypay (2010). The scale is a one-dimensional and 10-item scale. The internal consistency of the scale in this study was 0,76.

Design and Procedures

Before scales were distributed to the athletes, the consent form was signed by informing the athletes who participated in the study after giving them a piece of preliminary information about the study's purpose, importance, and procedure. Then, the researchers collected the data face to face. No time restrictions were made in collecting the data.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed with mediation analysis. Three different parameters were drawn between self-efficacy, self-confidence, and emotional intelligence. The first parameter was drawn between self-efficacy and self-confidence. The second one was between self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. The last one was between emotional intelligence and self-confidence. Standard errors were calculated with the delta method. Because Mardia's Skewness (3,81) and Kurtosis values (21,54) were significant, data had no multivariate normality. Therefore, we conducted bootstrapping method procedure with 5000 bootstrap replication samples to calculate more accurate parameter estimates (Byrne, 2001). The Maximum Likelihood method was chosen when the analysis was run.

RESULTS

Table 1. Parameter estimates of direct effects

		Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	Lower	Upper
Self-Efficacy	Self-Confidence	1.078	0.092	11.731	<0.001	0.874	1.292

Table 1 shows the direct effect of self-efficacy on self-confidence, indicating 1.078 with 0.092 SE. The parameter estimate was significant (z=11.731, p<0.001). This result revealed the positive effect of self-efficacy on self-confidence.

Table 2. Parameter estimates of total effects

		Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	Lower	Upper
Self-Efficacy	Self-Confidence	1.255	0.096	13.033	<0.001	1.058	1.458

Note. Delta method standard errors, bias-corrected percentile bootstrap confidence intervals, ML estimator. NB: Not all bootstrap samples were successful: CI based on 4999 samples.

Table 2 shows the total effects of self-efficacy on self-confidence (R=1.225, SE= 0.096, z=13.033, p<0.001).

Table 3. Parameter estimates of indirect effects

			Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	Lower	Upper
Self-Efficacy	Emotional Intelligence	Self-Confidence	**0.177**	**0.041**	**4.279**	**< .001**	**0.085**	**0.305**

Note. Delta method standard errors, bias-corrected percentile bootstrap confidence intervals, ML estimator. NB: Not all bootstrap samples were successful: CI based on 4999 samples.

Table 3 presents the indirect effect of self-efficacy on self-confidence via emotional intelligence. We found that self-efficacy indirectly predicted self-confidence through emotional intelligence. Based on the linear regression, self-efficacy predicted self-confidence by 0.52 (R=0.524, R^2=0.274). These results show that emotional intelligence has a mediator role between self-efficacy and self-confidence.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between self-efficacy and self-confidence of elite team athletes. The hypothesis is that team athletes' emotional intelligence is a mediator between the relationship of self-efficacy and self-confidence. Although team sports require excessive human relationships between team members to be focused on the same goals, individual characteristics play a critical role in this relationship. Studies have reported that emotional intelligence predicts sports performance (Kopp & Jekauc, 2018; Crombie, Lombard & Noakes; 2009). Team sports environment has important dynamics influenced by emotions because this environment is an environment where emotions are intense and complex (Birwatkar, 2014; Friesen et al., 2013). Understanding, controlling and utilizing emotions in competitive sports lead to excellence in performance (Meyer & Fletcher, 2007). The fact that emotions are affected not only during sportive competitions but also by external factors in daily life before and after the competition requires athletes and trainers to have a high level of emotional intelligence. Even if the accurate measure of human intelligence is considered IQ, it is thought that the determinant of life success is people's emotional intelligence (EQ) because of the studies (Yesilyaprak, 2001). This situation is undoubtedly inevitable for athletes. All of the results of Goleman (2000) 's analysis as head of the "Emotional Intelligence Research Consortium in Organizations" at around five hundred companies, government agencies, and non-profit organizations around the world indicate that emotional intelligence plays a prominent role in achieving excellence in almost every field of business. Findings revealed by these studies are that emotional intelligence has vital importance in using the abilities possessed by the mind. In other words, athletes who do both individual and team sports increase their mental performance if they recognize their emotions and are guided constructively. As it is known, people who cannot manage their emotions in sports environments, which are one of the essential economic elements of the world, cannot calm their minds! It is thought that the control of emotions and behaviors is related to the athlete's emotional intelligence in many sports where the result is determined in seconds or even milliseconds. Self-confidence has been suggested to be an important factor for athletic development (Vealey, 2001). Studies showed that individuals participating exercise for a long term are less likely to develop anxiety problems (Downs and Strachan, 2016).

This study revealed that emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and self-confidence are associated constructs in team sports that can lead team athletes to excellence in sports performance. The results showed that self-efficacy increased self-confidence and emotional intelligence played a mediator role, which means that emotional intelligence is necessary to enhance self-confidence in sport. In a team sports environment, athletes compete for team goals, including long and short-term goals. Besides, they must set their individual performance goals and train to achieve them. Having a team and personal goals creates pressure and stress on athletes to cope with. Since emotional intelligence covers emotional Appraisal, controlling, utilizing, and understanding emotions, it helps athletes cope with the stressors in a team environment and self-beliefs, including efficacy and confidence. For the sports performance, enhancing self-efficacy and self-confidence is necessary. Studies showed that self-efficacy and self-confidence can be improved with imagery use (Munroe-Chandler and Fishburne, 2008). In sport context, self-efficacy and self-confidence are negatively correlated with anger, indicating that these features can be used to control destructive emotions in sports environment. George (29914) tested the casual effect of self-efficacy theory by providing results that showed self-efficacy positively correlated with hitting performance of baseball players. Wanget al. (2020) examined the self-efficacy, emotional intelligence by hypothesizing a structural model in which self-efficacy was a mediator variable between physical activity and emotional intelligence. They found that physical activity amount was significantly and positively correlated with emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, and self-efficacy was significantly positively correlated with emotional intelligence. Self-efficacy had a significant partial mediating power.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study has an essential contribution to sports studies by handling the reciprocal relationship among SE, EI, and SC. Studies also showed that self-efficacy and self-confidence are critical determinants in sports performance (Feltz, Short, & Sullivan, 2008; Feltz, 2007; Vealey & Chase, 2008). In this perspective, higher EI lead to a high level of self-confidence, which will result in performance improvement. As this study revealed, increasing SE level provides athletes with a high EI level, which

leads them to have an increase in SC. This study provides significant evidence to expand our knowledge on the role of emotional intelligence in team sports, explaining how SE, EI, and SC are associated.

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CITATION OF THIS ARTICLE

Çetin, S., Adiloğullari, İ. & Şenel, E. (2021). The relationship between self-efficacy and self-confidence: the mediating role of emotional intelligence: A study in elite athletes. *International Journal of Sport, Exercise & Training Sciences – IJSETS*, 7(4), 155-162.