

## INVESTIGATION OF EMPATHY AND SELF-ESTEEM IN DECISION MAKING AND DECISION-MAKING STYLES AMONG THOSE WHO PLAYED TEAM SPORTS<sup>4</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the empathy and self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles of athletes who are playing team sports according to their gender, type of sports they play and sports experience (the years of participation in sports). The sample of the study was composed of a total of 202 the licensed athletes playing in different sports clubs in Izmir, Turkey during 2010-2011 season and they were basketball players (n=53), soccer players (n=76), and handball players (n=73). Their mean age was  $22.95 \pm 3.45$  years and their mean sports experience was  $9.57 \pm 4.85$  years. Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire I-II which was developed by Mann et al. (1998) and Turkish adaptation of which was performed by Deniz (2004), and Empathy Scale in the Sports Situations (ESSS) developed by Erku and Yakupo lu (2001) were employed as measuring devices. Personal data were analyzed by descriptive statistical analysis such as frequency (n), percentage (%), mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation (Sd). Non-Parametric Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal Wallis test and multiple regression analysis were used to determine differences since the data for gender, type of sports and sport experience did not follow a normal distribution and were not homogenous. In conclusion, the emotional empathy scores and total empathy scores of female players were higher than male players. Handball players had higher emotional empathy than soccer and basketball players. Athletes who had sports experience between 1-9 years had lower self-esteem in decision-making compared to the players who had more than 10 years of sports experience and used the buck-passing decision-making and hyper vigilance decision-making styles more often.

**Key words:** Empathy, Basketball, Handball, Soccer, Self-esteem, Decision-making.

### ÖZET

Bu çalı manın amacı, takım sporu yapan sporcuların empati ve karar vermede öz saygı ve karar verme stillerinin cinsiyet, spor türü ve spor deneyimi de i kenlerine göre incelenmesi ve karar vermede özsaygı ve karar verme stillerine göre empatinin yordanması amaçlanmaktadır. Ara tırma örneklem gurubunu 2010 sezonunda zmir ilindeki kulüplerde lisanslı olarak basketbol (n=53) futbol, (n=76), hentbol (n=73) oynayan, ya ortalaması ( $\bar{x}$  ya =22.95±3.45) ve spor yapma süre ortalamaları ( $\bar{x}$  spordeneymim=9.57±4.85) olan toplamda 202 sporcu olu turmaktadır. Ara tırmada Mann ve Di . (1998) tarafından geli tirilen ve Türkçe'ye uyarılma çalı maları Deniz (2004) tarafından yapılmı "Melbourne Karar Verme Ölçe i I-II'nin (Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire I-II)" ölçe i ve Erku ve Yakupo lu (2001) tarafından geli tirilen Spor Ortamında Empati SEM (Empathy Scale in The Sports Situations ESSS) Ölçe i uygulanmı tır. Verilerin analizinde ki isel bilgiler için betimsel istatistik yöntemlerinden frekans (n), yüzde (%), aritmetik ortalama ( $\bar{x}$ ) ve standart sapma (Ss) kullanılmı tır. Farklı ı tespit etmek amacıyla; cinsiyet, spor türü ve spor deneyimi de i kenlerinde normal da ılım ve homojenlik ko ulları yerine gelmedi i için Non-Parametrik testlerden Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis testi ve çoklu regresyon analizi uygulanmı tır. Sonuç olarak duygusal empati ve toplam empati (SEM) puanı, kadın sporcularda daha yüksek bulunmu tur. Hentbolcuların duygusal empatileri basketbol ve futbolculara göre daha yüksektir. Spor deneyimi 1-9 yıl olan sporcuların karar vermede öz saygıları spor deneyimi 10 yıl ve üzeri olan sporculara göre dü ük oldu u ve kaçınan ve panik karar verme stillerini daha çok kullandıkları görülmü tür.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Empati, Basketbol, Hentbol, Futbol, Özsaygı, Karar verme.

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## INTRODUCTION

Communication skills in sportive settings are important. Empathy level, communication skills and decision-making status of the athletes affect their sportive life. Empathy, shortly described as putting yourself in somebody else's shoes, is an important variable for an effective and healthy interpersonal communication (Eisenberg ve Miller, 1987; Kalliopuska, 1987).

According to the Roger's description of empathy (1951), it is the process in which people –by putting themselves in others' place- look at the things from their perspectives, understand, feel their emotions and thoughts correctly and communicate them that they are correctly understood (Dökmen, 2006). Rogers (1951) emphasizes that people intentionally empathize with a cognitive process by listening to and reflecting upon the words and emotions carefully. Stein (1970) argues that empathy is a more complex process than feeling and thinking oneself as if one is him. When the literature is examined, it is seen that empathy-related studies have been disputed in different dimensions. Some authors put emphasis on the cognitive aspect of empathy (Eisenberg et al. 1998) while others deal with affective aspect of empathy (Mehrabian and Epstein, 1972). However; the common point of all of these studies is that empathy has multi-dimensional structure (Hoffman 1990, Eisenberg and Miller 1987).

It is true that empathy is also a significant variable in sportive activities (Kalliopuska, 1987) and empathic skills of the athletes are effective in sportive settings –particularly, during sportive competitions- and in sportive branches. Erku and Yakupo lu (2001) underline that it is an important factor for team success that an athlete should use emphatic skills towards his teammates, trainer and opponent athletes; should predict how they will act and should accordingly react.

Apart from demonstrating an empathic approach that plays an important role in communicational skills; decision-making which is the ability, the process or the

method used to this end (Budak, 2000) in order to select from two or many choices by making probability estimations about the events is also important in this process. Kuzgun (1992) defines decision-making as overall cognitive and behavioral efforts regarding selection and preference in case of different situations. In the course of life, internal and social-environmental characteristics of the individuals make up their reaction styles against events and stimulus (Av aro lu, 2007). Poor decision-making styles of people –regardless of their educational status- affect their achievement level as well as their development of communication with social environment negatively (Deniz, 2002).

It is proved that individuals use different strategies during decision-making. Decision-making strategy is the manner to determine how to behave when an individual encounters an ambiguous situation about which he should make a decision (Ersever, 1996). Decision-making behavior are affected by both emotional characteristics (Plous 1993) and cognitive characteristics (Güçray,1998). Glovich (1984) mentions that sports-world is the best place for the studies on decision-making because to Glovich, sports is a potential laboratory in which cognitive structures of decision-making are examined (Cited by Bar-Eli and Raab, 2006). It is known that to produce sportive success; not only are physiological, psychological and technical –tactical efforts enough but also cognitive factors are important. Decision-making ability regarded as one dimension in determining sportive success is important (Egesoy et al. 1999). Indeed; it is a significant research topic to be dealt with under laboratory conditions how people think in sportive settings, how they analyze and judge the current situation (Bar-Eli and Raab, 2006).

Johnson (2006) talks about naturalness and dynamism as a characteristic of decision-making and emphasizes that athletes can decide in unexpected and unprepared situations in reaction to the changing external dynamics during the games and their decision-making may



change in plays where time is limited and not limited. Actually; deciding what to do in a certain sportive event depends on knowledge level of the player and his perception of environmental information at that moment. Therefore; a difference in knowledge level and perception of environmental information at that moment may lead to a difference in decision-making styles.

It is considered that having a high or low level of empathic skills affects one's collection and examination of the information about the events, production and selection of possible options, assessment of results and decision-making. Davis (1983) reports that people with anxiety, lack of self-confidence, prejudice and low self-esteem become introvert; which prevents emergence of his empathic ability (Cited Sezer and Damar 2005). Therefore; it is possible that there may be a relation between empathy and decision-making.

## METHOD

### Participant Recruitment

The study was conducted with the licensed athletes playing in different sports clubs in Izmir and its counties, Turkey during 2010-2011 season. The sample of the study was composed of a total of 202 the licensed

When the literature is investigated, there are studies about empathy and sportsmanship (Sezen Balçıkanlı and Yıldırım, 2011), personality and empathy (Zekiolu and Tatar, 2006), empathy and team unity (Dorak and Vurgun, 2006), empathy and life satisfaction (Batu, 2009). There are numerous studies on the determination of self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles (Egesoy et al. 1999; Çetin, 2009; Çetin et al. 2010; Certel et al. 2012). However; we do not see any study on the prediction of empathy in terms of self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles. In this sense; the aim of the study was to examine empathy and self-esteem in decision making and decision-making styles of athletes in terms of their gender, type of sports and sports experience (the years of participation in sports) and to predict empathy in relation with self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles.

athletes who played in basketball (n=53), soccer (n=76) and handball (n=73). Their mean age was  $\bar{X}_{years}=22.95\pm3.45$  and their mean sports experience was  $\bar{X}_{sports\ experience}=11.62\pm4.84$ . Demographic data about the athletes were presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic Data About The Athletes

Variables		n	%
<b>Gender</b>	Female	81	40.1
	Male	121	59.9
<b>Type of Sport</b>	Basketball	53	26.2
	Handball	73	36.2
	Football	76	37.6
<b>Age</b>	18-20 years	31	15.3
	21-25 years	127	62.9
	26 years	44	21.8
<b>Educational status</b>	High School Degree	4	2.0
	University Student	171	84.7
	University School Degree	27	13.3
<b>Living place</b>	County	19	9.4
	City	26	12.9
	Metropolitan City	157	77.7
<b>Sports experience</b>	1-9 years	63	31.1
	10-14 years	89	44.1
	15 years	50	24.8
<b>Participation in National Team</b>	Yes	78	38.6
	No	124	61.4
<b>TOTAL</b>		202	100

## Data Collection

In the study; Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire I-II which was developed by Mann et al. (1998) and Turkish adaptation of which was performed by Deniz (2004), and Empathy Scale in the Sports Situations (ESSS) developed by Erku and Yakupo lu (2001) were used as measuring devices.

### Empathy Scale in the Sports Situations (ESSS)

In the study; Empathy Scale in the Sports Situations (ESSS) developed by Erku and Yakupo lu (2001) was used in order to measure empathy level of athletes in the sportive situation. It is a four point Likert type scale. The scale is consisted of 16 items under emotional empathy (5 items) and cognitive empathy (11 items) (Erku and Yakupo lu; 2001). The reliability and validity tests of the scale were performed with 242 athletes who played handball, soccer and basketball with mean ages being  $\bar{X}_{years}=21.67\pm 3.23$  and mean sports experience being  $\bar{X}_{sports\ experience}=7.69$ . Internal consistency coefficients of the scale were found to be .725 for emotional empathy and .792 for prediction in sports (cognitive empathy) and .789 in total ESSS. In this study; internal consistency coefficients of the ESSS are as follows: emotional empathy: .686; cognitive empathy: .843 and .822 in total ESSS. As seen, internal consistency coefficients of the ESSS were found to be within acceptable ranges in this study.

### Melbourne Decision-Making

#### Questionnaire (I-II)

Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire was originally developed by Mann et al. (1998) and it was adapted into Turkish by Deniz (2004) and reliability and validity tests were administered to 154 university students. Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire is consisted of two parts: the first part includes self-esteem in

decision-making (self-confidence, 6 items). The second part is composed of 22 items and measures decision-making styles. There are four subscales (Deniz, 2004):

1. **Vigilance decision-making style:** Vigilance involves a careful, unbiased, and thorough evaluation of alternatives and rational decision making (6 items).

2. **Buck-passing decision-making style:** Buck Passing involves leaving decisions to others and showing a tendency to avoid responsibility and thus trying to get rid of responsibility by leaving decisions to others (6 items).

3. **Procrastination decision-making style:** Procrastination involves delaying and postponing decisions with no acceptable reasons (5 items).

4. **Hypervigilance decision-making style:** Hypervigilance involves trying to get a solution by feeling under pressure with a hurried, anxious approach in case of a situation requiring making a decision (5 items).

Scoring of the items is made with 2 points "true", 1 point "sometimes true" and 0 point "not true". Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem in decision-making and higher decision-making style (Deniz, 2004).

Upon the administration on 154 university students, internal consistency coefficients of the MDMQ I-II were as follows: self-esteem in decision making: .72; vigilance: .80; buck-passing: .78; procrastination: .65; and hypervigilance: .71. In this study; internal consistency coefficients of the MDMQ I-II were as follows: self-esteem in decision making: .63; vigilance: .77; buck-passing: .68; procrastination: .65 and hypervigilance: .73; which are within the acceptable ranges.

#### Analysis of the data

Personal data were analyzed by descriptive statistical analysis such as frequency (n), percentage (%), mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation (Sd). In order to test whether or not normal distribution and homogeneity conditions were established and to explore the differences in the variables of gender, type of sports and sport



experience; Kolmogorow Smirnow test was employed. Non-Parametric Tests, Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis test were employed since the data regarding gender, type of sports and sport experience did not follow a normal distribution and were not

homogenous. As for the prediction of sportive empathy in relation with self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles; Multiple Regression Analysis was employed.

## FINDINGS

Table 2 included the data about numbers, means and standard deviations of empathy, self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles of the athletes

**Table 2.** The Data About N, X̄, Sd Empathy, Self-Esteem in Decision-Making And Decision-Making Styles of The Athletes.

Scale	n	X̄	Sd	Min	Max	Interval
Emotional Empathy	202	16.53	2.48	10	20	5-20
Cognitive Empathy	202	34.87	5.23	16	44	11-44
ESSS (Total)	202	51.40	6.25	32	64	16-64
Self-esteem in decision-making	202	9.78	1.85	3	12	0-12
Vigilance decision-making style	202	9.30	2.53	0	12	0-12
Buck-passing decision-making style	202	3.55	2.44	0	12	0-12
Procrastination decision-making style	202	3.17	2.10	0	8	0-10
Hypervigilance decision-making style	202	3.25	2.34	0	10	0-10

When Table 2 was examined, it may be argued that athletes' emotional empathy levels ( $\bar{X}=16.53$ ), cognitive empathy levels ( $\bar{X}=34.87$ ) and ESSS ( $\bar{X}=51.40$ ) were above the average. It was seen that athletes' mean scores of self-esteem ( $\bar{X}=9.78$ ) and mean scores of vigilance decision-making style ( $\bar{X}=9.30$ ) were also above the average. The lowest means scores were obtained in buck-passing ( $\bar{X}$

$=3.55$ ), hypervigilance ( $\bar{X}=3.25$ ), procrastination ( $\bar{X}=3.17$ ) decision-making styles. Mann Whitney U test was employed to decide whether or not there was a difference among the athletes in terms of the mean scores of empathy and self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles in relation with gender and the relevant results were shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Distribution of Scores of Empathy And Self-Esteem in Decision-Making and Decision-Making Styles in Terms of Gender.

Scale	Cinsiyet	n	Median	U	p
Emotional Empathy	Female	81	123.17	-4.344	.000*
	Male	121	86.99		
Cognitive Empathy	Female	81	102.07	-.113	.910
	Male	121	101.12		
ESSS (Total)	Female	81	110.51	-1.967	.049*
	Male	121	95.47		
Self-esteem in decision-making	Female	81	95.12	-1.291	.197
	Male	121	105.77		
Vigilance decision-making style	Female	81	100.91	-.119	.906
	Male	121	101.89		
Buck-passing decision-making style	Female	81	100.91	-.012	.990
	Male	121	101.89		
Procrastination decision-making style	Female	81	98.56	-.590	.555
	Male	121	103.47		
Hypervigilance decision-making style	Female	81	106.02	-.907	.365
	Male	121	98.48		

\*p<0.05

When Table 3 was examined, it was noted that there was a significant difference on behalf of female athletes in the mean scores of emotional empathy ( $U=-4.344$ ,  $p=.000$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and total ESSS scores ( $U= -1.967$ ,  $p=.049$ ;  $p<.05$ ) in terms of gender. No statistically significant difference existed in cognitive empathy in relation with gender. ( $U= -.113$ ,  $p=.910$ ;  $p>.05$ ). Also, there was

no statistically significant difference among the athletes in self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles in relation with gender ( $p>.05$ ). Kruskal Wallis test was employed to decide whether or not there was a difference among the athletes in terms of the mean scores of empathy and self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles in relation with type of sports and the relevant results were shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Distribution of Scores of Empathy And Self-Esteem in Decision-Making and Decision-Making Styles In Terms of Type of Sports.

Scale	Type of Sports	n	Median	X2	p	Difference
<b>Emotional Empathy</b>	Football	76	96.74	15.201	.001*	3-1 3-2
	Basketball	53	81.37			
	Handball	73	121.07			
<b>Cognitive Empathy</b>	Football	76	110.18	2.766	.251	
	Basketball	53	94.71			
	Handball	73	97.39			
<b>ESSS (Total)</b>	Football	76	106.37	5.293	.071	
	Basketball	53	85.70			
	Handball	73	107.90			
<b>Self-esteem in decision-making</b>	Football	76	109.72	3.483	.175	
	Basketball	53	102.52			
	Handball	73	92.21			
<b>Vigilance decision-making style</b>	Football	76	102.50	.042	.979	
	Basketball	53	101.35			
	Handball	73	100.57			
<b>Buck-passing decision-making style</b>	Football	76	92.68	5.440	.066	
	Basketball	53	97.08			
	Handball	73	113.88			
<b>Procrastination decision-making style</b>	Football	76	103.26	.848	.654	
	Basketball	53	105.62			
	Handball	73	96.67			
<b>Hypervigilance decision-making style</b>	Football	76	98.97	.839	.657	
	Basketball	53	107.75			
	Handball	73	99.60			

\* $p<0.05$

When Table 4 was investigated, it was understood that there was a significant difference among the athletes in emotional empathy ( $X^2= 15.201$ ,  $p=.001$ ) in relation with type of sports ( $p<.05$ ). As a result of the Mann Whitney U test employed to find the cause of the difference; it was seen that handball players had higher emotional empathy levels as compared with soccer players and basketball players. There was no statistically significant difference among the athletes in cognitive empathy

( $X^2= 2.766$ ,  $p=.251$ ;  $p>.05$ ) and total ESSS ( $X^2 = 5.293$ ,  $p=.071$ ) in terms of type of sports ( $p>.05$ ). Also, no statistically significant difference was found among the athletes in self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles in relation with type of sports ( $p>.05$ ). Kruskal Wallis test was employed to decide whether or not there was a difference among the athletes in terms of the mean scores of empathy and self-esteem in decision-making and decision-



making styles in relation with sports experience and the relevant results were shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Distribution of Scores of Empathy And Self-Esteem in Decision-Making and Decision-Making Styles in Terms of Sports Experience.

Scale	Sports Experience	n	Median	X <sup>2</sup>	p	Difference
<b>Emotional Empathy</b>	1-9 years	63	102.71	.088	.957	
	10-14 years	89	101.76			
	15 years	50	99.51			
<b>Cognitive Empathy</b>	1-9 years	63	92.81	2.514	.285	
	10-14 years	89	108.01			
	15 years	50	100.86			
<b>ESSS (Total)</b>	1-9 years	63	94.17	1.786	.409	
	10-14 years	89	106.99			
	15 years	50	100.95			
<b>Self-esteem in decision-making</b>	1-9 years	63	84.36	8.968	.011*	1-2
	10-14 years	89	112.56			1-3
	15 years	50	103.41			
<b>Vigilance decision-making style</b>	1-9 years	63	95.21	2.793	.247	
	10-14 years	89	109.12			
	15 years	50	95.87			
<b>Buck-passing decision-making style</b>	1-9 years	63	116.00	6.458	.040*	1-2
	10-14 years	89	91.89			
	15 years	50	100.33			
<b>Procrastination decision-making style</b>	1-9 years	63	112.51	3.408	.182	
	10-14 years	89	95.38			
	15 years	50	98.52			
<b>Hypervigilance decision-making style</b>	1-9 years	63	118.50	8.973	.011*	1-2
	10-14 years	89	97.65			2-3
	15 years	50	86.94			1-3

\*p<0.05

When Table 5 was investigated, it was seen that there was a significant difference among the athletes in self-esteem in decision-making (X<sup>2</sup>= 8.968, p=.011; p<.05), buck-passing (X<sup>2</sup>= 6.458, p=.040; p<.05) and hypervigilance decision-making styles (X<sup>2</sup>= 8.973, p=.011; p<.05). As a result of the Mann Whitney U test employed to explore the cause of the difference; it was seen that athletes with a sports experience of 1-9 years had lower self-esteem in decision-making than those with a sports experience of 10 years. It was also found out that athletes with a sports experience of 1-9 years used buck-passing decision-making style more than those whose sports experience was between 10 and 14 years. As for the hypervigilance decision-making style; it was seen that athletes resorted to hypervigilance decision-making style less as the sports

experience increased. On the other hand; there was no statistically significant difference between the athletes' sports experience and emotional empathy, cognitive empathy, ESSS, vigilance decision-making style and procrastination decision-making style (p>.05).

Regression analysis was used in order to find answer to the question whether or not self-esteem in decision-making, vigilance, buck-passing, procrastination, hypervigilance decision-making styles could significantly predict sportive empathy status of the athletes. The results of regression analysis about the prediction of sportive empathy status (dependent variable) of the athletes using the variables of self-esteem in decision-making, vigilance, buck-passing, procrastination, hypervigilance decision-making styles were demonstrated in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Results Of Multiple Regression Analysis About The Prediction Of Sportive Empathy Status Of The Athletes

Variable	B	Standard Deviation	b	t	p	Pairwise r	partial r
Fixed variable	41.656	3.463	-	12.030	.000	-	-
Self-esteem in decision-making	.679	.286	.201	2.374	.019	.264	.167
Vigilance decision-making style	.373	.176	.151	2.121	.035	.215	.150
Buck-passing decision-making style	-.061	.221	.024	-.277	.782	-.149	-.020
Procrastination decision-making style	.035	.264	.012	.133	.894	-.113	.010
Hypervigilance decision-making style	-.081	.267	-.030	-.302	.763	-.168	-.022

R=0.305, R<sup>2</sup>=.093, F (5-196)=4.015, p=.002

When Table 6 was investigated, a significant but weak correlation was seen between the prediction of sportive empathy status and self-esteem in decision-making, vigilance, buck-passing, procrastination, hypervigilance decision-making styles (R=0.305, R<sup>2</sup>=.092, p<.01). According to the standardized regression coefficients (b); the predictive variables were understood to be self-esteem in decision-making, vigilance, hypervigilance, buck-passing and procrastination; respectively. When the t test results concerning the significance of regression coefficients were analyzed; it was seen that self-esteem in decision-making (t=2.374, p=.019) and vigilance decision-making style (t=2.121, p=.035) were important predictors of sportive empathy. Buck-passing, procrastination and hypervigilance decision-making styles were not important predictors of sportive empathy. According to the regression analysis results, regression equation about the prediction of sportive empathy was presented below:

$$\text{EMPATHY} = 41.656 + 0.679 \text{ self-esteem in decision-making} + 0.373 \text{ vigilance} - 0.061 \text{ buck-passing} + 0.035 \text{ procrastination} - 0.081 \text{ hypervigilance.}$$

## DISCUSSION AND RESULT

The following results were obtained from the study which was conducted to examine the empathy and self-esteem in decision making and decision-making styles of athletes who were playing team sports according to their gender, type of sports and sports experience and to predict empathy in relation with self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles:

It was determined that when the scores obtained from Empathy Scale in the Sports Situations and Melbourne Decision-Making Questionnaire (I-II) were generally evaluated, it was determined that the athletes used vigilance decision-making style which involves a careful, unbiased, and thorough evaluation of alternatives and rational decision making more but used buck-passing, procrastination and hypervigilance decision-making styles less.

Yılmaz and Akyel (2008) reported that empathy score levels of candidate physical education teachers were moderate. Çetin et al. (2010) told that the applicants who participated in the special sportive ability exam of School of Physical Education and Sports had higher self-esteem levels and used vigilance decision-making style more. In light of these results; it may be argued that athletes leave decisions to others and do not show a tendency to avoid responsibility; on the contrary, they are confident of and show respect for their decisions without avoiding from making decisions and are tended to show vigilance decision-making style. It may be suggested that athletes are those who are tended to choice by evaluating the problems carefully before making decisions; upon which –we think- playing sports has a big effect. Also; Av ar and Temel (2008) emphasized that



sports improved one's decision making ability and problem solving ability.

It was seen that there was significant difference in emotional empathy dimension scores and total scores of ESSS on behalf of female athletes in terms of gender. When the literature was investigated; it was seen that different findings were found in the studies conducted with university students in relation with the effect of gender upon empathic skills. Some studies reported that gender did not cause any difference upon empathic skills (Dökmen, 1987; Tanrıda , 1992), whereas others reported a significant difference on behalf of women (Murray, 1998; Karakaya 2001; Alver, 2004; Uygun 2006). It was explored in the studies on candidate physical education teachers or on physical education teachers that gender did not play a key role in empathy (Korkmaz et al. 2003; Yılmaz and Akyel, 2008; Ba tu , 2009; Kolayi and Yi iter, 2010). In the studies undertaken by Erku and Yakupo lu (2001); Dorak and Vurgun (2006) on athletes; it was found out that female athletes had higher empathic skills. The results of these studies are in agreement with ours. These results are also confirming the general opinion that women show more emotional reactions to the events than men (Dökmen, 2006).

In the study; it was seen that there was no significant difference between self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles in terms of gender. Certel et al. (2012) reported in their study on taekwondo players that female athletes had higher level of self-esteem in decision-making and used buck-passing, procrastination, hypervigilance less as compared with male athletes. However; in many studies conducted with university students, it was understood that the gender of the students did not affect self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles (Kesici, 2002; Deniz, 2002; Av aro lu, 2007; Çetin, 2009). The fact that both students of physical education and of other academic branches demonstrated similar attitudes may have resulted from the possibility that

the participants possessed similar cultural values. Likewise; Mau (2000), Man et al. (1998) argued that cultural similarities and differences are important factors in decision-making.

In the study; it was found out that handball players had higher scores in emotional empathy of the ESSS than basketball players and soccer players but no difference was seen in cognitive empathy scores of ESSS and total scores. In the studies of Erku and Yakupo lu (2001) and Dorak and Vurgun (2006) on athletes; it was noted that soccer players had lower level of empathy than basketball players and handball players; which were in line with our results. Considering that empathy helps a healthy interpersonal communication and provides solutions to the conflicts; the reason why soccer players had lower empathy level may have been caused by the possibility that they possess poor team-communication and team-interaction. In team sports; it is an important factor for a better team-spirit, healthy intra-team-communication and team success that the player should develop empathic behaviors towards teammates, trainers and opponent players and should predict how they may act.

No statistically significant difference existed in self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles in terms of type of sports of the participant athletes. It may be argued that athletes relied on and respected for their decisions although their sportive branches were different. In the study of Çetin (2009) on SPES students, it was seen that there was no statistically significant difference between athletes who played team sports and those who played individual sports in relation with self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles. In light of our study results; it may be concluded that type of sports of the participant athletes did not affect the level of self-esteem in decision-making and their decision-making styles.

In the study, no statistically significant difference existed between empathy scores

and sports experience among the participant athletes. It was seen that self-esteem in decision-making was lower among the athletes with a sports experience of 1-9 years than those with a sports experience of 10 years and athletes with a sports experience of 1-9 years used buck-passing and hypervigilance decision-making styles more. The study of Kioumourtzoglou et al. (1998) on national water polo team and amateur basketball team, and the study of Egesoy et al. (1999) on amateur and professional soccer players reported that there was no statistically significant difference between experienced athletes and amateur athletes in terms of correct and quick decision-making. In the study of Çetin (2009) on elite and non-elite athletes; it was understood that there was no difference among the players in terms of level of self-esteem in decision-making and the use of decision-making styles. The study of Certel et al. (2012) pointed out that self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles of taekwondo players with national and international sportive achievements were similar. In the relevant literature; the studies which were conducted with experienced and inexperienced athletes from different sportive branches (Ripoll et al.1995; Mc Pherson,1999; Fontana, 2007) revealed results on behalf of experienced athletes. The study of ahin (2008) on Turkish soccer referees indicated that buck-passing scores of the referees aged between 18 and 25 were higher than those referees aged between 26 and 30 and 36 and 40. These findings concurred with our findings. It may be concluded that sports experience of the athletes affect their decision-making styles in presence of a problem. It was seen that self-esteem in decision-making and vigilance decision-making style were important predictors of sportive empathy. Davis (1983), reports that anxiety, lack of self-confidence, prejudice and low self-esteem may cause people to become introverted; which prevents emergence of their empathic ability (Cited Sezer and Damar 2005). Similarly; our study explored

that self-esteem and vigilance decision-making style were important predictors of sportive empathy.

In conclusion, it was seen that the empathy levels and self-esteem in decision-making scores were above the average. It may be said that athletes used vigilance decision-making style more while buck-passing, procrastination and hypervigilance decision-making styles less. The female athletes had higher emotional empathy scores of ESSS and total empathy scores than male players. Handball players had higher emotional empathy level than soccer and basketball players. Athletes' self-esteem in decision-making and decision-making styles did not change in terms of type of sports. Athletes whose sports experience was longer had higher self-esteem in decision-making as compared with the players whose sports experience was shorter and thus used buck-passing decision-making style and hyper vigilance decision-making styles less. The predictors of empathy were determined to be self-esteem in decision-making and vigilance decision-making style.

As a conclusion; as far as our results were concerned, providing trainings and social activities for the acquisition of self-awareness and the interaction with teammates may play a key role in the improvement of emotional empathy levels of male athletes –particularly, male football players-. Trainers may help athletes develop empathic behavior by increasing their self-awareness, providing listening-skills and assertiveness-trainings and presenting experiences about how to explain their emotions using “I language” and how to show respect and tolerance. Besides; considering that self-esteem in decision-making and vigilance decision-making style are important predictive in sportive empathy, it may be useful for the trainers to use encouraging exercises during the trainings so that athletes can increase self-esteem in decision-making and use vigilance decision-making style. Likewise; it is thought that athletes should be helped to identify



negative behaviors that prevent empathy such as prejudices and introversion, speaking with over-aggression, low effective listening, lack of assertiveness ability and low self-esteem and they should be encouraged to change these negative behaviors. As a recommendation; studies that investigate the correlation between empathy level and team success, intra-team

communication can be undertaken and scales that address athletes and measure decision-making and empathy can be designed. Considering the lack of measurement tools regarding athletes in our country, it is significant that conducting these studies will contribute to closing a big gap in physical education and sports and to the literature.

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