

# Successful Reflection of Technical Director Changes on Sportive Management in Football

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the effects of managerial changes on in-season performance in the leading football leagues of Europe. The research evaluates the impact of managerial changes on end-of-season performance in seven different leagues including the Turkish Süper Lig, English Premier League, Italian Serie A, Spanish La Liga, French Ligue 1, German Bundesliga, and Portuguese Primeira Liga. Utilizing data spanning from the 2018-2019 to 2022-2023 seasons, the study employs sample sizes based on the number of managerial changes observed in each league. Paired sample tests are conducted in our analyses to assess the effects of managerial changes on end-of-season performance. This test enables us to statistically evaluate differences in team performance before and after managerial changes. Our findings indicate a significant effect of managerial changes on end-of-season performance. Analyses conducted in leagues such as the English Premier League, Spanish La Liga, and Portuguese Primeira Liga reveal statistically significant differences in average points per match before and after managerial changes. The results underscore the strategic importance of managerial changes in football club management. In this context, football clubs and managers should adopt a more cautious approach when planning and implementing managerial changes.

**Keywords:** Technical Director Change, Sports Management, Success in Football

## Özet

### Futbolda Teknik Direktör Değişimlerinin Sportif Yönetime Başarı Yansıması

Bu araştırma, Avrupa'nın önde gelen futbol liglerinde teknik direktör değişikliklerinin sezon içi performans üzerindeki etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, Türkiye Süper Lig, İngiltere Premier Lig, İtalya Serie A, İspanya La Liga, Fransa Ligue 1, Almanya Bundesliga ve Portekiz Primeira Liga gibi yedi farklı ligdeki teknik direktör değişikliklerinin sezon sonu performansına olan etkilerini değerlendirmiştir. Araştırma, 2018-2019 ile 2022-2023 sezonları arasındaki dönemi kapsayan verileri kullanmıştır. Örneklem büyüklüğü, incelenen her ligdeki teknik direktör değişikliklerinin sayısına dayanmaktadır. Analizlerimizde, teknik direktör değişikliklerinin sezon sonu performans üzerindeki etkilerini değerlendirmek için paired sample testi kullanılmıştır. Bu test, teknik direktör değişikliği öncesinde ve sonrasında takımların performansı arasındaki farklılıkları istatistiksel olarak değerlendirmemize olanak tanımıştır. Sonuçlarımız, teknik direktör değişikliklerinin sezon sonu performansı üzerinde belirgin bir etkisinin olduğunu göstermektedir. İngiltere Premier Ligi, İspanya La Liga ve Portekiz Primeira Liga gibi liglerde yapılan analizler, teknik direktör değişikliklerinin öncesinde ve sonrasında maç başı puan ortalamaları arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir farklılık olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Araştırmanın sonuçları, futbol kulüplerinin yönetiminde teknik direktör değişikliklerinin stratejik bir öneme sahip olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, futbol kulüpleri ve yöneticilerinin teknik direktör değişikliklerini planlarken ve uygularken daha dikkatli bir yaklaşım benimsemeleri gerekmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Teknik Direktör Değişimi, Spor Yöneticiliği, Futbolda Başarı

## INTRODUCTION

Football, one of the most popular sports in the world (7), has been one of the most influential and popular sports for more than a century. The game has gone far beyond being just a sporting event and has become a cultural phenomenon (11; 13). Success is possible for an athlete or a team not only through talent and hard work, but also through proper guidance, technical and tactical development. By combining theoretical knowledge with practical experience, coaches guide and train athletes in accordance with their abilities, prepare them for competitions and assume a leadership role. In this context, coaches not only have a significant impact on the success of athletes, but are also an indispensable source of guidance and support for athletes (5). Success in the world of sport is often closely related to performance. Performance generally refers to the effectiveness and efficiency in performing a specific action or task. In the field of sport, performance usually includes the performance of an individual or a team in a particular competition or training. The importance of performance in sport is based on many factors. For example, the performance of an athlete or team can be influenced by many factors such as physical abilities, technical skills, tactical intelligence, mental toughness and motivation, athletes' nutrition, healthy lifestyle behaviors, etc. The combination of these factors usually determines the success of an athlete or team (14; 2; 3).

In the literature, one of the most important conditions for achieving success in performance sport is the establishment of a healthy coach-athlete relationship. The focus of the coach is usually the athlete or the team, and these relationships generally involve interactions between an individual or a group (4; 12). In soccer, coaches are forced to work with higher expectations and under constant pressure to perform (9). Technical directors are generally held largely responsible for the performance of the team they work for. The team's technical director plays a key role in determining the team's ranking and influences the team's position in the league while directing the training team. He or she also plays an important role in determining which footballers work how hard and which footballers are put on the transfer list, functioning as one of the club's managers. In this context, coaches are important figures who shape not only the performance on the pitch, but also the overall strategy of the club and the future of the team. In addition to their sporting achievements, they contribute to the success of the club by focusing on the development of the players, creating a team identity and determining appropriate strategies (10). Many soccer teams tend to change the manager as a first step when they experience failure. After this change, it is generally hoped that the unsuccessful period will end and positive results will be obtained in a short time (8). The technical director is a factor that greatly affects the performance of the football team. In this study, it is aimed to help us understand the impact of coaching changes on league success and to evaluate how decisive these changes are. In all these contexts, this research is intended to provide information on setting strategy, supporting management decisions and understanding the success of football clubs in general in the football world, and this information is intended to help clubs shape their future decisions and compete more effectively in the football industry. A systematic analysis of the impact of coaching changes on league success will shed light on decision-making processes in the football industry by providing a strategic perspective to football clubs and contributing to the use of these analyses in future coaching appointments and performance evaluations of clubs.

## METHOD

In this study, retrospective survey model and relational survey model, which are quantitative research methods, were used. For the research, firstly, the conceptual framework of the research was examined and the literature review of the study was conducted.

In this study, the top-level men's football leagues of Türkiye, England, Italy, Spain, France, Germany and Portugal, which are the 7 most valuable football leagues in Europe according to Transfermarkt, the international football data provider, within the scope of the 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 seasons, were included in the study and the coaching changes made during the season of the football teams playing in these leagues in the specified seasons constituted the study group. The data obtained through Transfermarkt.com and news agencies between the specified dates were analyzed and turned into documents. SPSS 23 package program was used for data analysis. Before making comparisons between variables, normality analysis was performed. Since the skewness and kurtosis (skewness and

kurtosis) values were between -2 and +2, it was assumed that the variables were normally distributed (6). Since the variables in the study showed normal distribution, comparison analyzes were made with Paired Sample T-Test, one of the parametric tests. Descriptive and descriptive statistics tables were created for the statistical representation of the data obtained.

### Ethical approval and institutional permission

The scope of the research was found ethically appropriate for the study with the permission decision of Istanbul Aydın University Ethics Committee meeting dated 15/02/2024 with the number and meeting number 2024/02.

### FINDINGS

In this section, the results of the data collected within the scope of the research are presented in tables.

**Table 1.** Countries Total Number of Technical Director Changes by Season

League	Seasons					Toplam
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
Turkey Super League	17	24	26	19	14	100
England Premier League	7	6	4	10	12	39
Germany Bundesliga	6	7	10	3	10	36
France Ligue 1	5	5	10	3	14	37
Spain La Liga	11	9	7	11	10	48
Italy Serie A	12	12	7	7	8	46
Portugal Primeira Liga	9	13	13	12	10	57

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that in the leagues of the 5 seasons in which the top-level men's football teams of the countries are included, Türkiye Super League is the league with the most coaching changes, while Germany Bundesliga is the league with the least changes. When analyzed according to the seasons, it is observed that there was the least number of coaching changes in 2021-2022, while there was the most number of coaching changes in 2022-2023. The reason for this situation can be said to be the effect of the pandemic in 2020.

**Table 2.** The Effect of the Change of Coach on the Team's Average Points Per Match

League	Season		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	sd	t	p
Türkiye Super League	2018-2019	Before	17	1,1176	,40917	-	,066	,948
		After		1,1088	,41194			
	2019-2020	Before	24	1,0129	,50515	23	-1,280	,213
		After		1,2083	,66906			
	2020-2021	Before	26	1,0158	,41849	25	-,153	,879
		After		1,0369	,59345			
	2021-2022	Before	19	1,0716	,50501	18	-1,025	,319
		After		1,2263	,75133			
	2022-2023	Before	14	1,0750	,42846	13	-1,647	,124
		After		1,3307	,54815			
England Premier League	2018-2019	Before	7	,9271	,46006	6	-,279	,790
		After		1,0157	1,02326			
	2019-2020	Before	6	1,0717	,24490	5	,016	,988
		After		1,0667	,70073			
	2020-2021	Before	4	1,0325	,59214	3	-6,826	,006*
		After		1,4150	,67791			
	2021-2022	Before	10	,8880	,37446	9	-,861	,412
		After		1,0270	,66642			
	2022-2023	Before	12	1,0150	,40455	11	,258	,801
		After		,9392	,83106			
Italy Serie A	2018-2019	Before	12	,8967	,56274	11	-,820	,430
		After		1,0608	,59488			
	2019-2020	Before	12	,9125	,32012	11	-,841	,418

		After		1,0350	,56725			
		Before	7	,7571	,23514			
	2020-2021	After		1,0457	,38078	6	-1,625	,155
		Before	7	,6700	,22121	6	-,501	,634
		After		,7443	,49467			
	2022-2023	Before	8	,4725	,33234	7	-1,614	,151
		After		1,0750	,97108			
Spain La Liga	2018-2019	Before	11	1,1364	,59080	10	-1,293	,225
		After		1,4236	,64899			
	2019-2020	Before	9	1,0989	,62762	8	-,228	,826
		After		1,1667	,66398			
	2020-2021	Before	7	,9429	,38169	6	-1,747	,131
		After		1,3357	,46173			
	2021-2022	Before	11	,7609	,36476	10	-2,237	<b>,049*</b>
		After		1,0873	,31090			
	2022-2023	Before	10	,9880	,41055	9	-1,383	,200
		After		1,2270	,55550			
France Ligue 1	2018-2019	Before	5	,9060	,25472	4	,047	,965
		After		,8940	,60760			
	2019-2020	Before	5	,9720	,44712	4	,463	,667
		After		,8680	,64068			
	2020-2021	Before	10	1,1960	,65107	9	,165	,873
		After		1,1570	,66488			
	2021-2022	Before	3	,8233	,09866	2	1,334	,314
		After		,3700	,64086			
	2022-2023	Before	14	,9243	,42140	13	-,885	,392
		After		1,0779	,59790			
Germany Bundesliga	2018-2019	Before	6	,8450	,31425	5	-2,365	,064
		After		1,1583	,54763			
	2019-2020	Before	7	1,3314	,39113	6	-,970	,369
		After		1,5271	,60673			
	2020-2021	Before	10	,9840	,47917	9	,555	,592
		After		,8860	,67838			
	2021-2022	Before	3	1,1200	,59573	2	,951	,442
		After		,7300	,25239			
	2022-2023	Before	10	,9430	,75972	9	-1,335	,215
		After		1,2920	,66813			
Portugal Primeira Liga	2018-2019	Before	9	1,2200	,51761	8	-,637	,542
		After		1,4400	1,00344			
	2019-2020	Before	13	1,2900	,49578	12	-,502	,625
		After		1,3785	,82829			
	2020-2021	Before	13	,9623	,20389	12	,295	,773
		After		,9192	,44765			
	2021-2022	Before	12	,8050	,23635	11	-3,545	<b>,005*</b>
		After		1,1317	,38690			
	2022-2023	Before	10	,6170	,49607	9	-,602	,562
		After		,7210	,64633			

When Table 2 is examined, as a result of the Paired Sample test analysis of the average points per match of the relevant seasons according to the average points per match before and after the change of manager; It is seen that the average points per match of the English Premier League before the change of manager in the 2020-2021 season is 1.0325, 1.4150 after the change; the average points per match of the Spanish La Liga before the change of manager in the 2021-2022 season is 0.7609, 1.0873 after the change; the average points per match of the Portuguese Primeira Liga before the change of manager in the 2021-2022 season is 0.8050, 1.1317 after the change.

In this case, it is seen that there is a statistically significant difference between the average points per match before the change of manager and the average points per match after the change of manager in the English Premier League in the 2020-2021 season, Spanish La Liga and Portuguese Primeira Liga in the 2021-2022 season ( $p<.05$ ). We can say that this difference is due to the positive reflection of the coaching changes made in the mentioned seasons on the points per match obtained and the success of the teams.

In addition, although no statistically significant results were obtained in 35 different seasons, it was observed that the average points of the teams increased in 25 seasons and decreased in 10 seasons compared to the previous values.

**Table 3.** Effect of Changes by Country on Overall Point

Country		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	sd	t	p
Türkiye	Before	100	1,0513	,45016	-1,757	99	,082
	After		1,1674	,61021			
England	Before	39	,9772	,39283	-,552	38	,584
	After		1,0438	,76785			
Germany	Before	36	1,0283	,54366	-1,199	35	,238
	After		1,1558	,64182			
France	Before	37	,9935	,46568	,47	36	,963*
	After		,9886	,62863			
Spain	Before	48	,9842	,49027	-2,803	47	,007*
	After		1,2446	,53599			
Italy	Before	46	,7713	,40068	-2,411	45	,020*
	After		1,0061	,61366			
Portugal	Before	57	,9840	,46053	-1,609	56	,113
	After		1,1161	,70718			

When Table 3 is examined, as a result of the Paired Sample test analysis of the average points per match of all seasons of the football leagues of 7 countries according to the average points per match before and after the change of technical director; it is seen that the average points per match of Spain La Liga and Italy Serie A before the change is 0.9842, the average points per match of Spain Serie A is 0.7713, the average points per match of Spain La Liga and Italy Serie A after the change is 1.2446 and 1.0061 respectively.

In this case, it is seen that there is a statistically significant difference between the scores before the change and the scores after the change ( $p<.05$ ) in the analysis of the coaching change in the top football leagues of Spain and Italy according to the average points per match.

We can say that this difference is due to the positive effect of the changes of managers in the Italian and Spanish football leagues on the clubs' points per match.

**Table 4.** Results of the Analysis of the Team's Standing in the League on the Date of the Coach's Departure and the New Standing at the End of the Season after the Change

League	Season		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	sd	t	p
Türkiye Super League	2018-2019	Before	17	13,882	3,6208	16	,921	,371
		After		13,000	4,1982			
	2019-2020	Before	24	12,625	4,8077	23	,861	,398
		After		12,125	4,9984			
	2020-2021	Before	26	15,577	5,7003	25	,000	1,000
		After		15,577	4,9004			
	2021-2022	Before	19	14,421	4,8456	18	1,914	,072
		After		12,789	6,4168			
	2022-2023	Before	14	12,500	4,6202	13	1,467	,166
		After						

England Premier League	2018-2019	After		11,571	4,6029	6	1,549	,172
		Before	7	14,429	6,3733			
	2019-2020	After		14,143	6,3095	5	,720	,504
		Before	6	15,667	4,2269			
	2020-2021	After		14,500	5,2440	3	1,000	,391
		Before	4	14,000	6,4807			
	2021-2022	After		12,500	8,1854	9	,643	,537
		Before	10	15,700	4,2960			
	2022-2023	After		15,200	5,5936	11	-,402	,695
		Before	12	14,417	4,9992			
Italy Serie A	2018-2019	After		14,750	4,1588	11	,243	,813
		Before	12	15,750	4,3719			
	2019-2020	After		15,500	4,2747	11	,969	,353
		Before	12	15,583	4,6015			
	2020-2021	After		14,750	4,9566	6	,893	,406
		Before	7	17,000	2,8868			
	2021-2022	After		15,857	3,1320	6	,444	,673
		Before	7	18,286	2,2147			
	2022-2023	After		18,000	2,8868	7	1,469	,185
		Before	8	18,000	2,0000			
Spain La Liga	2018-2019	After		16,250	3,9188	10	1,469	,173
		Before	11	14,273	5,7461			
	2019-2020	After		15,444	6,2071	8	-1,835	,104
		Before	9	15,000	6,5765			
	2020-2021	After		14,429	4,1975	6	1,307	,239
		Before	7	16,286	3,8173			
	2021-2022	After		16,636	3,2333	10	,766	,461
		Before	11	17,091	3,3001			
	2022-2023	After		15,300	4,7621	9	,887	,398
		Before	10	16,000	3,8006			
France Ligue 1	2018-2019	After		14,800	4,0866	4	1,129	,322
		Before	5	16,600	2,8810			
	2019-2020	After		14,400	5,9833	4	,609	,576
		Before	5	15,400	5,1284			
	2020-2021	After		11,500	6,3640	9	1,000	,343
		Before	10	12,100	6,0083			
	2021-2022	After		18,330	2,8868	2	-1,000	,423
		Before	3	18,000	2,6458			
	2022-2023	After		14,571	3,8773	13	1,963	,071
		Before	14	15,714	3,6040			
Germany Bundesliga	2018-2019	After		14,000	5,0990	5	1,000	,363
		Before	6	14,833	3,1885			
	2019-2020	After		11,000	5,5076	6	2,066	,084
		Before	7	12,142	4,8795			
	2020-2021	After		13,900	4,7246	9	1,000	,343
		Before	10	14,100	4,7481			
	2021-2022	After		16,667	,5774	2	-,555	,635
		Before	3	16,000	1,7321			
	2022-2023	After		12,600	6,7528	9	1,695	,124
		Before	10	14,980	5,0067			
Portugal Primeira Liga	2018-2019	After		11,222	6,1192	8	1,512	,169
		Before	9	12,333	5,7009			
	2019-2020	After		9,615	5,9096	12	1,059	,310
		Before	13	10,385	5,6501			
	2020-2021	After		12,462	4,4650	12	,691	,503
		Before	13	13,154	4,6699			

2021-2022	Before	12	14,667	4,0973	11	1,715	,114
	After		12,750	4,9932			
2022-2023	Before	10	16,200	1,5492	9	1,029	,331
	After		15,300	3,3682			

When Table 4 is examined, no statistically significant difference was found between the ranking in the league at the time of the coaches' departure and the new ranking at the end of the season after the change in the 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 seasons ( $p>.05$ ). However, although there was no statistically significant result, it was determined that the ranking of the teams increased to a more successful ranking in 30 of the total 35 season evaluations.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the effects of manager changes on in-season performance in Europe's leading football leagues. The findings clearly show how manager changes in the Turkish Super League, English Premier League, Italian Serie A, Spanish La Liga, French Ligue 1, French Ligue 1, German Bundesliga and Portuguese Primeira Liga between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 seasons are reflected on the end-of-season performance. First of all, it is observed that the Turkish Super League had the highest number of manager changes during the five seasons analyzed. However, the German Bundesliga had the least number of such changes. This provides an important perspective on the coaching change policies or intra-league dynamics of different leagues.

The results show that managerial changes have a significant impact on end-of-season performance. In leagues such as the English Premier League, Spanish La Liga and Portuguese Primeira Liga, a statistically significant difference was found between the average points per match before and after the coaching changes. This suggests that the right timing and an appropriate change strategy can improve the performance of teams. This study has revealed that coaching changes have a strategic importance in the management of football clubs. In this context, future research could further investigate the reasons behind coaching changes and evaluate the effectiveness of different change strategies.

Furthermore, football clubs and managers should adopt a more careful approach when planning and implementing coaching changes. This approach can enable clubs to assess their current performance and identify situations where changes are truly necessary.

Finally, stakeholders in the football industry should develop data-driven strategies to better understand the impact of coaching changes on end-of-season success. These strategies can improve the way clubs evaluate their performance and allow them to make more informed future decisions.

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