



**PERSONALITY TRAITS OF COACHES ACCORDING TO THE VIEWS OF  
PROFESSIONAL HANDBALL PLAYERS**

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**Abstract**

*The knowledge, experience, positive personality, and leadership qualities possessed by coaches are known to influence the relationships and unity among athletes. The aim of this research is to determine the personality traits of coaches according to professional handball players. The study employed a phenomenological design within a qualitative research model. Purposeful sampling was used to interview 14 professional handball players from the Elazığ Women's 1st League A group. The data were analyzed and evaluated through content analysis. The majority of participants expressed that their coaches possessed positive personality traits, had extensive technical expertise, were leaders, and were well-recognized. The coaches' competitive nature, ability to foster unity and solidarity within the team, attentiveness, compassion, and provision of both material and moral support were among the favored qualities. Athletes stated that when their coaches made mistakes, they did not harbor prejudices or negative thoughts but believed they could discuss and rectify any errors. However, being overly ambitious, irritable, restrictive, excessively planned and programmed, or overly compassionate were among the disliked characteristics of their coaches.*

**Keywords:** Personality, Coach personality traits, Leadership.

**Profesyonel Hentbol Sporcularının Görüşlerine Göre Antrenörlerinin Kişilik Özellikleri**

**Öz**

*Antrenörlerin sahip olduğu bilgi, tecrübe, olumlu kişilik ve liderlik özellikleri, sporcuların birbirleriyle olan ilişkilerini ve birlikteliklerini etkilediği bilinmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı profesyonel hentbol sporcularına göre antrenörlerinin kişilik özelliklerini belirlemektir. Araştırmada nitel araştırma modelinden fenomenolojik desen kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak Elazığ 1. Lig Kadınlar A grubu'nda yer alan 14 profesyonel hentbol sporcu ile görüşülmüştür. Veriler içerik analizi yapılarak incelenmiş ve değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmada katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu antrenörlerinin olumlu kişilik özelliklerine sahip, teknik donanımı fazla, lider, tanınır olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Antrenörün mücadeleci olması, takım içinde birlik ve beraberliği sağlaması, sporcularına ilgili, merhametli olması ve maddi manevi açıdan desteklemesi antrenörün sevilen özellikleri arasında yer almıştır. Sporcular antrenörleri bir hata yaptığında ön yargılı olmayıp hakkında olumsuz düşünmediklerini, bir hata varsa konuşup telafi edebileceklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Aşırı hırslı olma, sinirli olma, kısıtlayıcı olma, aşırı plan ve programlı olma, fazla merhametli olma ise antrenörlerinin hoşlanılmayan özellikleri arasında yer almıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelime:** Kişilik, Antrenör kişilik özellikleri, Lider.

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## 1. Introduction

Every individual has different attitudes and actions in response to occurring events. Despite sharing common biological structures, individuals are not alike and exhibit different attitudes towards events (Cüceloğlu, 2002). Their thoughts, emotions, and perspectives on events vary, and this difference is a result of the concept of "personality" (Burger, 2019). The term personality is used to express our feelings and thoughts about individuals, to distinguish them from one another, and to denote their characteristics (Okutan, 2010).

Personality is a form of consistent, structured relationships that individuals establish with their internal and external environments, distinguishing them from other individuals. In this definition, personality is described as "distinctive" because it refers to traits that differentiate one person from another; "consistent" because a person exhibits similar behaviors in different situations; and "a form of relationship" because it encompasses the individual's feelings and thoughts about themselves as well as others and events (Cüceloğlu, 2002).

According to Altınköprü (2003), the concept of personality influences an individual's entire life. Although it is based on many realities, it is different from and more than the sum of these realities. It is an abstract concept that represents a whole. It maintains and controls an individual's integrity. It is an organizing and unifying force, a psychological phenomenon rooted in biology and physiology (Pervin et al., 2010). The concept of personality is not fixed; while it has some unchanging parts, it is continuously evolving and changing (Gençtan, 2009).

Numerous factor analysis studies have been conducted to identify the dimensions of personality traits, and among these studies, the Five-Factor Model of personality has gained widespread acceptance. The primary reason for this is that this model has been scientifically proven to be valid and reliable in describing human personality (Hough & Ones, 2001).

When Examining the Dimensions of This Model:

*a. Extraversion:* Friendly, energetic, cheerful, excitement-seeking, and dominant (high score); distant, calm, introverted, preferring solitude (low score).

*b. Openness:* Creative, analytical, open to other views, sensitive (high score); traditional, conservative, factual, uninterested (low score).

*c. Emotional Stability:* Relaxed, self-confident, patient, open to criticism, stress-tolerant (high score); anxious, tense, timid (low score).

*d. Agreeableness:* Humble, cooperative, sincere, understanding (high score); skeptical, stubborn, competitive, cautious (low score).

*e. Conscientiousness:* Systematic, determined, achievement-oriented, ambitious, meticulous (high score); unplanned, procrastinating, easily distracted, disorganized (low score) (Yelboğa, 2006).

As individuals, coaches possess certain personality traits that influence their physical presence, personal and social relationships, and their ability to serve as role models for their athletes. Coaches are expected to be intelligent, have strong critical thinking skills, maintain high levels of motivation, and be honest and reliable. They should also be capable of making quick decisions, conducting thorough analyses, and possessing persuasive abilities. Furthermore, they need to continually update their knowledge in both general culture and their professional field, communicate effectively with their athletes, make rigorous and intensive training sessions enjoyable to keep their athletes motivated, and manage crises efficiently (Bensiz, 2016).

The personality of a coach is crucial for effectively managing a handball team. Their knowledge and skills aid in providing leadership to the team. Each coach has unique personality traits. The type of positive feedback athletes provide about various coaching personalities is related to the team's success over time. Coaches are constantly observed by their athletes. The coach's positive or negative behavior can be adopted by the athletes, highlighting the importance of the coach's personality traits (Ayten, 2019).

The personality traits that coaches should possess can be listed as follows;

**Communication Skills and Empathy:** Effective communication and empathetic interaction are essential components of a successful coach–athlete relationship. These skills foster trust and mutual understanding, which enhance athletic performance (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). **Leadership and Motivation:** Leadership is a critical attribute of effective coaching. Coaches who demonstrate inspiring leadership and positive reinforcement can significantly impact athletes' motivation and team cohesion. **Technical Knowledge and Lifelong Learning:** An in-depth understanding of sport-specific techniques and a commitment to continuous learning are vital for coaching success. Coaches must stay updated on scientific developments and modern training methods (International Olympic Committee, 2015). **Emotional Intelligence and Self-Awareness:** High-performance coaches often exhibit strong emotional intelligence. This enables them to regulate emotions and build constructive relationships with athletes, while also responding appropriately to emotional needs (Chan & Mallett, 2011). **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Coaches must adapt to changing environments and unexpected challenges. Flexibility in strategy and decision-making is essential to team success. **Ethical Values and Sense of Fairness:** Maintaining ethical standards and treating athletes with fairness builds trust and contributes to a positive sporting environment (International Olympic Committee, 2015). **Planning and Organizational Skills:** Well-structured planning of training sessions and competition schedules supports both immediate performance and long-term athlete development (UK Coaching, 2021). **Problem-Solving and Decision-Making:** Coaches often face unpredictable scenarios during training and competition. Strategic decision-making under pressure plays a key role in athletic outcomes (Metrifit, 2022). **Continuous Learning and Development:** Coaching is a profession that demands ongoing adaptation to evolving knowledge and techniques. Effective coaches actively seek out new training methods, technologies, and scientific findings to ensure they provide the best possible guidance to their athletes (International Olympic Committee, 2015). **Team Building and Collaboration:** Effective team building requires interpersonal sensitivity, trust, and shared responsibility to improve team cohesion and performance (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). **Self-Awareness and Personal Growth:** Highly effective coaches are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and prioritize their personal development. This commitment to growth promotes both professional and personal advancement, ultimately enabling them to become more effective leaders (UK Coaching, 2021).

In the literature, the impact of coaches' leadership styles on athletes has been explored in various sports disciplines, including handball. Studies examining how leadership behaviors affect athlete performance, motivation, and intra-team relationships show that the role of the coach is not limited to technical knowledge alone, but also involves managerial and emotional competencies. For instance, the study by Aydın and Taşmektepligil (2023) indicated that handball coaches' self-efficacy levels are positively associated with multidimensional leadership behaviors and that these characteristics vary according to variables such as age, gender, and experience. Similarly, Marques et al. (2013) emphasized that the importance Portuguese handball coaches place on social competence and communication skills is a critical factor in achieving success. Another study revealed that professional handball players value educational and supportive leadership behaviors the most (Karakuş, 2013). Moreover, an analysis of the cognitive strategies used by an experienced elite-level coach during competition showed that the coach

demonstrated high levels of mental control and situational awareness in decision-making and game management (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005). These findings suggest that effective coaching in handball depends not only on tactical and technical skills but also on a strong leadership profile that reflects a multidimensional personality structure.

Today, the coaching profession encompasses multiple roles—from technical direction to psychological guidance, from crisis management to team coaching. This versatility requires that coaches be evaluated not only in terms of their knowledge and experience but also based on their personal competencies (Horn, 2008). A review of the literature reveals that there is a limited number of academic studies systematically evaluating the personality traits of coaches from the perspective of professional athletes. Specifically, profiling coaches based on athletes' personal experiences and identifying which traits contribute to improved performance point to a significant gap in both academic research and applied sports science.

In this context, identifying coaches' personality traits from the viewpoint of professional athletes is essential for understanding not only individual performance but also team dynamics, athlete commitment, and the psychological safety within the team. This research primarily aims to define coaches' personality profiles based on athletes' direct experiences and to support the existing body of theoretical knowledge with empirical findings. In particular, the results of this study may be re-evaluated in the framework of the Five-Factor Personality Theory.

Furthermore, the perceptions developed by professional athletes based on their direct experiences with coaches shed light on the athlete-coach relationship and contribute to a redefinition of effective coaching practices. However, the limited number of studies conducted in this field in Turkey especially those offering comprehensive analyses of professional athletes' perceptions of coach personality makes this research especially significant. This study aims to identify the personality traits that coaches should possess from the perspective of professional athletes and contribute to effective coaching practices, thereby offering an original perspective to the literature on sports sciences. Additionally, it will open a discussion on which personality traits are most valued by athletes and how these traits influence motivation, trust, and performance.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the personality traits that coaches should have according to professional athletes, reveal the general perceptions athletes hold about coach personality, explore which traits are considered more effective or problematic based on athletes' positive or negative experiences, examine the relationship between coach personality traits and athletes' motivation, team cohesion, and individual performance, and analyze the effects of demographic variables such as age, education, and years of experience on athletes' perceptions of coach personality. The following research questions were asked to professional athletes.

1. "What do you think about your coach?"
2. "What are your coach's leadership characteristics?"
3. "Which of your coach's qualities do you appreciate the most and why?"
4. "How do you react when your coach makes a mistake?"
5. "What are the aspects of your coach that you dislike?".

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research Model**

This research was conducted using the qualitative research method. Qualitative research is defined as an approach that emphasizes theory-building, and the study and understanding of social phenomena within their natural contexts using qualitative techniques such as observation, interviews,

and document analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this study, the phenomenological approach, which is one of the qualitative research designs, is used to deeply understand the subjective experiences of professional handball players regarding their coaches' personality traits.

Phenomenology focuses on how individuals make sense of their experiences and transform these into both personal and shared consciousness. In other words, phenomenology centers on individuals' perceptions, explanations, feelings, judgments, memories, meanings, and conversations about a phenomenon (Patton, 2014). In phenomenological research, data sources consist of individuals or groups who have experienced and can articulate or reflect upon the phenomenon being studied. The primary technique used for data collection in phenomenological research is the interview technique. The analytic interaction and flexibility that the interview method offers researchers are beneficial for uncovering the experiences and meanings of a phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this context, it is aimed to express the views of professional handball players about their coaches' personality traits based on their own observations and experiences.

## 2.2. Study Group

In qualitative research, the diversity of participants is critically important for diversifying the findings. Differences in the demographic information of participants regarding the research topic will enrich the results and inferences of the study, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic being investigated (Seggie & Bayyurt, 2017). The sample of the study consists of 14 active athletes from the same handball team. Considering that the participants share similar social environments, training conditions, and sports experiences, a purposive sampling method known as homogeneous sampling commonly preferred in qualitative research was adopted in this study. This sampling approach allows for a more detailed analysis of interactions and shared experiences within a specific, similar group. Thus, it aims to obtain meaningful and in-depth data directly related to the research topic (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The study group consisted of 14 professional handball players from the Elazığ Women's 1st League A group. The demographic characteristics of the interviewed athletes are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*The Demographic Characteristics of the Interviewed Athletes*

Variable	f	%
<b>Age</b>		
16–22 year	8	57.14
23–38 year	6	42.86
<b>Total</b>	14	100
<b>Education</b>		
High School Student	5	35.71
High School Graduate	3	21.43
University Student	3	21.43
University Graduate	3	21.43
<b>Total</b>	14	100
<b>Duration of Making Sport</b>		
3–7 year	4	28.58
8–12 year	5	35.71
13–15 year	5	35.71

<b>Total</b>	14	100
<b>Duration of Sharing the Same Team</b>		
3–5 year	5	35.71
7–8 year	4	28.58
12–13 year	5	35.71
<b>Total</b>	14	100

### 2.3. Data Collection Tool and Data Collection

In studies conducted using qualitative research methods, researchers collect direct information about the subject by talking directly to participants or by observing their actions and movements in the environment. In qualitative research methods, the behavior of individuals in their environments is observed and recorded through interviews with participants (Creswell, 2013). In this research, a semi-structured interview form was used to express the opinions of professional athletes about their coaches' personality traits. Interviews are one of the most common data collection methods in qualitative research. The widespread use of interviews is due to their effectiveness in obtaining information about individuals' experiences, attitudes, opinions, complaints, feelings, and beliefs (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

Selecting and developing appropriate data collection tools that ensure consistency with the methodological design is critical for obtaining meaningful and accurate data (Seggie & Bayyurt, 2017). In this study, a semi-structured interview form was used to understand participants' experiences related to their coaches, consistent with the phenomenological design. In semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions are asked, and questions are directed to participants following an interview guide. Participants are expected to provide detailed information in response to the questions. The semi-structured interview form used in the research consists of two parts. The first part includes four questions related to demographic variables (age, education level, years of experience in sports, and years in the current team). The second part contains five open-ended questions aiming to explore athletes' perceptions of their coaches

The prepared semi-structured interview form was reviewed by two field experts, and necessary adjustments were made before interviewing the participants. Interviews were conducted face-to-face by the researcher with professional handball players. After giving a brief explanation about the research to the athletes participating in the interview, the questions were asked, and the answers were recorded using a voice recorder. The recorded responses were transcribed into Word format. The responses obtained from the participants were used as primary data.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis involves obtaining findings from data, and this process has several challenges. The primary difficulty in qualitative analysis lies in understanding the data. This involves reducing the amount of raw information, distinguishing between necessary and unnecessary information, identifying significant patterns, and conveying the essence of the data to provide a framework (Patton, 2014). The use of data obtained during the research directly affects the research results. Therefore, careful evaluation of data analyses is necessary to clearly interpret the data. The aim is to examine the data obtained during the study meaningfully. For this purpose, after transcribing the recorded audio, the data were coded to allow for meaningful analysis. Coding involves transcribing the data obtained during data collection into text, analyzing the categories in sentences, and adding terms to these categories typically based on the participants' language (Creswell, 2013). During the coding process, the researcher must consider the interview questions or the conceptual framework of the

research and continuously be aware of what they are looking for within the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this research, the data obtained through interviews were coded using descriptive analysis and content analysis techniques.

### **2.5. Validity and Reliability**

As stated in many studies, determining validity and reliability in qualitative research is one of the most critical elements that enhance the quality of the research (Başkale, 2016; Golafshani, 2003; Punch, 2005; Yağar & Dökme, 2018). Guba and Lincoln (1982) emphasized the element of credibility in qualitative research when discussing validity and reliability, highlighting criteria such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Creswell, 2003; Houser, 2015; Merriam, 2013; Whittemore et al., 2001). Considering the prominent criteria in this research, a series of strategies were envisaged.

To ensure the validity of the research, strategies such as prolonged engagement, member checking, expert review, including quotations, and detailed description were used (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996). Firstly, as a strategy to enhance the validity of the measurement tool, national and international studies related to the subject were reviewed. The interview questions were prepared in accordance with the phenomenological research design based on the recommendations of experts in the field. Prolonged engagement, which is the most effective way to ensure credibility in qualitative research, is effective in controlling biases, establishing a relationship based on mutual trust, and obtaining accurate responses (Houser, 2015; Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). The field observation notes (including the interviewer's observations and impressions related to the interviewee's attitudes and behaviors, the interview location, etc.) and the data obtained from prolonged interviews are criteria that enhance the validity of the study. Whether the study findings accurately reflect the participants' thoughts is understood through member checking (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996). The data presented in the research were sent to the interviewees for their approval before starting the analysis, and the expert review strategy was employed to increase the credibility of the study by examining it from various perspectives. While analyzing the views of the interviewed athletes, each athlete was given a code (e.g., K1, K2, K3...). Codes were created by grouping similar or identical expressions from the athletes' views. To support the created codes, quotations from the athletes' views were directly included.

The element that ensures reliability in qualitative research is the "clear definition of themes" that emerge from the coding process. If there is no difference in experts' interpretations of the themes, this ensures the reliability of the study. Additionally, a strategy known as "triangulation," which involves using multiple methods in data collection and having the collected data cross-check each other, was implemented, and all phases and data of the study were detailedly reported. The results obtained were correlated with the findings. Using the formula by Miles and Huberman (1994), the compliance value between researchers and experts was found to be 89%. A compliance percentage of 70% and above indicates the research is reliable. The raw data obtained in the research were stored in a manner that allows for examination by non-field experts (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### **2.6. Ethics Committee Approval**

Our study was approved by the Firat University Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee on 01.03.2024 with the protocol number 2024/05.

### **3. Findings**

This section is presented in five headings according to the research questions. In this part of the research, the findings and interpretations of the results of the research questions are included.

### 3.1. Thoughts About Coach

Participants were asked the question, "What do you think about your coach?" The participants' views are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2**

*Thoughts About Coach*

Theme	Code
Thoughts About Coach	Positive Personality Traits
	Good technical knowledge
	Leader
	Recognized

The participants in the study were found to have positive opinions about their coaches. Some participants highlighted their coaches' positive personality traits, while others focused on different attributes. Those emphasizing personality traits described their coaches as successful, ambitious, determined, intelligent, and constantly self-improving. Other participants emphasized the technical characteristics of their coaches, stating that they possess extensive coaching knowledge, use this knowledge professionally, are disciplined, work with dedication, and manage to use their energy effectively during training sessions to guide the team well. Being a leader and being recognized were other themes mentioned. Below are some excerpts from the participants' views on the subject.

*"He's a technical person, I think he has a lot of technical knowledge. I trust his knowledge and training sessions. He is a very well-equipped coach in every way. He does not see sports and athletes solely as success-oriented but values the overall development of the athlete. He is a coach who considers and strives for what an athlete can do and how they can improve themselves outside of their sports career." P1*

*"He has a dominant leadership quality, reflects his characteristic traits on his behavior on the field, loves success, and is ambitious." P2*

*"My coach is successful, very determined, knows everything, and does what he says." P4*

*"I think he is a very good coach, disciplined, and knowledgeable enough, a leader competent to manage any team." P5*

*"He coordinates our training sessions in the best way, presents us with different training sessions every day, understands us, and can reflect his energy on us very well." P8*

*"He is very good and professional in the field he specializes in." P11*

*"I think he is a top-level coach in the region, there is no need to explain, all of Turkey knows him." P14*

### 3.2. Leadership Qualities of Coaches

Participants were asked the question, "What are your coach's leadership qualities?" The participants' views are presented in Table 3 below.

**Table 3***Leadership Qualities of Coaches*

Theme	Code
<b>Leadership Qualities of Coaches</b>	Effective use of technical knowledge
	Motivating the athlete
	Inspiring confidence in the athlete
	Analyzing the athlete
	Discovering talents
	Being respected by the community
	Being humane

In the research, the qualities that make coaches leaders in the eyes of the participants were stated as "effective use of technical knowledge, motivating the athlete, inspiring confidence, discovering talents, being respected, and being humane." Below are some excerpts from the participants' views on the subject.

*"He is a coach who reflects his technical knowledge very well on the field. He knows exactly what he wants on the field. He is very good at directing the athlete. He sees our deficiencies and makes the right interventions at the right place and time, which shows that he is a good leader." P1*

*"My coach is entirely a leader for me and a coach who can show us his leadership qualities. He is very good at adapting. He is excellent at gathering the team. He is very successful in solving problems during training and matches. The words he says to us during the match (you can do it, girl, you are the captain) are supportive and motivating. He trusts us a lot, and we work hard not to let him down. His attention to us also gives us confidence. I like that he inspires confidence. I think his qualities make him a good leader. He has a very dominant leadership side. It leads him to success. He is very eager, very passionate, very successful." P2*

*"He is a very ambitious person and does his job very well. Because of his ambition, I have always been motivated and taken this trait as an example. His ambition to win matches has positively affected his leadership." P8*

*"I like his techniques during the match. He is good at analyzing people and can solve the athlete well. He can discover the talents of athletes early on. His observation skills are very good. His discipline in training is very successful, making him a good leader." P10*

*"First of all, he is very knowledgeable and respected by everyone. He values us and takes care of us. He is very humane, which shows that he is a good leader." P12*

### **3.3. Admirable Qualities of the Coach**

Participants were asked the question, "Which of your coach's qualities do you admire the most?" The participants' views are presented in Table 4 below.

**Table 4***Admirable Qualities of the Coach*

Theme	Code
<b>Admirable Qualities of the Coach</b>	Being competitive
	Ensuring unity and togetherness
	Being attentive
	Being compassionate
	Being fun
	Providing both material and moral support

In the research, participants highlighted the admirable qualities of their coaches, such as being competitive, ensuring unity and togetherness in the team, being attentive to the athletes, being compassionate and helpful, being fun, and providing material and moral support to the athletes. Below are some excerpts from the participants' views on the subject.

*"The quality I admire most is that he never gives up; he's very competitive. No matter what, even if it's impossible, he likes to try." P1*

*"I really appreciate this aspect of my coach: he covers almost all our educational expenses and sends us to courses as a team. He supports us not only in sports but also materially and morally in our education." P5*

*"He provides all kinds of support, both material and moral. When I encounter a problem, I go to him, and he tries to solve it. This problem could be related to education or a family matter; I consult him. He is very helpful, and his approach to us is very good. He meets all our needs, from transportation to accommodation, for those coming from afar." P9*

*"He is someone who works extremely hard for the success of the team, sweating and laboring all night for our well-being. The quality I admire most is his compassion." P13*

*"During training and matches, there are times when we have fun and times when we work hard. He is a fun coach who knows how to have fun, chats with us, and I love his laughter." P4*

*"Actually, I love many of his qualities. Most of all, he loves us a lot, and no matter what, he never lets us be in need. I love that he takes care of us." P12*

*"He has a great ability to create unity and togetherness. He keeps us all together as a family. He sees us not just as his students but as his daughters and supports us in every way. I truly believe in his love. I feel like his spiritual daughter." P2*

### **3.4. Athletes' Reactions When the Coach Makes a Mistake**

Participants were asked the question, "How do you respond when your coach makes a mistake?" The participants' views are presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5***Athletes' Reactions When the Coach Makes a Mistake*

Theme	Code
<b>Athletes' Reactions When the Coach Makes a Mistake</b>	Not having negative thoughts
	Not being prejudiced
	Not thinking the coach will make a mistake
	Speaking openly
	Believing the coach will make amends
	Feeling upset

Some participants expressed that when their coach makes a mistake, they do not think negatively about it, they do not approach their coach with prejudice, they do not believe their coach will make mistakes, or if they do, they believe the coach will make amends and that they can speak openly and resolve the issue. However, some participants stated that they would react and feel upset about the situation. Below are some excerpts from the participants' views on the subject:

*"We also make mistakes. Our coach also makes mistakes, but we do not develop a negative attitude just because our coach makes a mistake. Moreover, if there is any mistake, we have the opportunity to talk about it." P1*

*"If our coach makes a mistake, I can openly tell him because he taught us not to be afraid of anything and to communicate it appropriately. He said no matter what, do not hesitate. Be people who stand tall against anyone, even if you make a mistake. So, if he makes a mistake, I can stand tall in front of him. I can explain the right and wrong without hesitation because I don't think he would be offended by what I say. I believe he would feel more inclined to make changes." P2*

*"If he makes a mistake, I won't respond to it with another mistake. After all, he is also human and can make mistakes. I do not develop a bad attitude towards him. If there is a mistake, we have the opportunity to talk to him and say, 'Coach, you made a mistake in this matter.' Coach İsmail also takes this into consideration and corrects his mistake." P3*

*"Everyone can make mistakes, including my coach. If he makes a mistake, no matter who it is towards, we as a team talk to him and try to correct it. Just as he tells us our mistakes, we can also tell him within the framework of respect." P5*

*"I have not witnessed him making a mistake before, but if such a situation occurs, I would talk to him without hesitation, listen to his ideas, and believe that he would make amends." P12*

*"I don't think he will make a mistake." P8*

*"I might react depending on the mistake he makes." P6*

*"I would be upset. I don't want someone who puts in so much effort for us to make a mistake." P11*

### **3.5. Disliked Qualities of the Coach**

Participants were asked the question, "What are the aspects of your coach that you dislike?" The participants' views are presented in Table 6 below.

**Table 6***Disliked Qualities of the Coach*

Theme	Code
<b>Disliked Qualities of the Coach</b>	Being overly ambitious
	Being irritable
	Being restrictive
	Speaking loudly
	Being overly planned and programmed
	Being too compassionate

The participants in the study expressed both the positive and negative aspects of their coaches. While some participants mentioned that there are no aspects they dislike about their coaches, the majority highlighted that their coaches' overly ambitious nature is a prominent negative trait. Ambition, which is necessary for achieving goals, is a positive quality for a coach. However, excessive ambition can lead to negative consequences such as anger, stress, and raised voice tones, which can demoralize players and lead to failure rather than success. Below are some excerpts from the participants' views on this subject:

*"Everything we face is due to Coach İsmail's ambition. He is very ambitious and does not like to lose. His ambition negatively affects his leadership quality. Sometimes, he sees things negatively due to his ambition, even when they are not bad." P2*

*"Sometimes, during matches, his ambition to win causes him to lose control. He might get red cards and go to the stands." P1*

*"His slight anger during matches is due to his determination and ambition. Sometimes, he might overdo it." P3*

*"Because he is very ambitious during matches, he can sometimes shout unintentionally. I think it's because of his ambition to achieve success." P4*

*"During matches, he sometimes takes out his anger on us due to his ambition. During training sessions, he might raise his voice because he wants to teach us something." P7*

*"One thing I dislike is his sudden outbursts during matches, shouting, and not thinking about the consequences." P1*

*"During matches, he can shout and get angry due to match stress. If we disagree on something, he can become aggressive. Sometimes we face injustices. He might not see things unless we warn him frequently, so we have to remind each other often." P2*

*"I dislike it when he gets very angry at us sometimes. He can be very restrictive and get very angry during training sessions. If we do something wrong, he might sometimes insult us, which can negatively affect our morale, but we talk it out and resolve it afterward." P5*

*"Sometimes, during matches, he can be too angry, which can demoralize us." P9*

As seen from the statements above, participants identified the following disliked traits in their coaches: being irritable, speaking loudly, and being restrictive. These traits can lead to a decrease in morale during training sessions and failure in matches.

While compassion is expressed as an admired trait among the coaches, some athletes consider excessive compassion as a negative trait. Participants who do not want their coaches to be overly compassionate because they feel it can be taken advantage of expressed this view as follows:

*"He is too compassionate. I think this is not a good trait because it is often exploited." P6*

*"He is very compassionate and forgives everyone. If I were in his place, I wouldn't be as compassionate." P10*

Another disliked trait expressed by participants is their coaches' overly planned and programmed nature:

*"I think it would be better if he were a bit more relaxed instead of being so planned and programmed." P14*

*"He works a lot and doesn't take time for himself. I think he is doing himself a disservice. He should be a bit more flexible and relaxed with his plans." P12*

#### **4. Discussion**

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that professional athletes perceive coaching not merely as a role requiring technical expertise, but also as one that demands strong personality traits and leadership skills. Athletes highlighted the following as desirable traits in a coach: success-oriented, determined, intelligent, continuously self-developing, technically knowledgeable, possessing leadership skills, reputable, motivational, trustworthy, respected by others, and compassionate.

Coaches who are competitive, foster unity and solidarity within the team, show genuine care and compassion towards their athletes, and provide both emotional and financial support were also appreciated. Athletes particularly emphasized the importance of effective communication and fairness in their coaches. Furthermore, they expressed that when their coach makes a mistake, they tend not to approach the situation with prejudice; instead, they believe in resolving conflicts through open dialogue and acknowledge that such issues can be rectified. On the other hand, traits such as excessive ambition, irritability, being overly controlling, excessively rigid or systematic, or being overly compassionate were listed among undesirable characteristics. These negative traits can significantly affect the quality of the relationship and communication between the athlete and the coach.

When evaluated through the lens of the Big Five personality model, the positive traits ascribed to coaches by the athletes such as leadership, motivation, trustworthiness, and effective use of technical knowledge can be associated with the dimensions of extraversion and conscientiousness. Similarly, characteristics such as being "humane," "compassionate," "fun," and "team-unifying" reflect a high level of agreeableness. Individuals high in agreeableness tend to be understanding, cooperative, and supportive, which can strengthen the coach-athlete relationship. Traits like being "solution-oriented," "talent-discovering," and "open to self-improvement" align with the openness to experience dimension, which contributes to a coach's ability to identify and develop athlete potential effectively.

Coaches have a significant impact on an athlete's development, the discovery of their talents, their ability to move in harmony as a team, experiencing the emotions of sportsmanship, competition, winning and losing, and growing as an athlete. It is observed that coaches' knowledge, experience, technical skills, professional equipment, and positive personality and leadership traits that can serve as a role model for athletes affect the harmony, communication, success, and unity of athletes within the team. Doğan (2004) emphasized that the characteristics of a coach are effective in maintaining a healthy coach-athlete relationship and achieving success. In another study, Çeyiz (2007) highlighted that coaches should have positive personality traits such as taking responsibility, supporting positive aspects,

being fair, open to criticism, empathetic, self-critical, and being a leader to establish good relationships with athletes. Therefore, in this research, questions were asked about the personality traits of the coaches who help the participants develop in handball, the leadership qualities of their coaches, the qualities they like and dislike the most among their coaches' characteristics, and how they react when their coaches make mistakes, aiming to gather data on the qualities of their coaches from the athletes' perspectives.

Looking at the demographic characteristics of the athletes interviewed in the research, it was found that they had been with the team for 3-15 years. It was concluded that being with a team for many years is important for the development of positive relationships between the athlete and the coach. In a similar study by Kirkbir et al. (2021), it was found that athletes working with their coaches for many years developed good communication with their coaches, who exhibited positive behaviors and maintained positive relationships with the athletes.

The first question asked to determine the relationships between the athletes and their coaches was about their thoughts on their coaches. The majority of participants described their coaches as successful, ambitious, determined, intelligent, constantly self-improving, possessing extensive technical knowledge, using this knowledge professionally, disciplined, working with dedication, effectively using their energy during training, and leading the team well while supporting athletes materially and morally. The research showed that coaches' extensive technical knowledge, professional equipment, leadership qualities, and positive personality traits contribute to harmony with the athletes. Similar results were found in the study by Güzel et al. (2013), where it was observed that the knowledge, professional equipment, leadership, and personality traits of football coaches enhanced communication and harmony between the coach and the athletes within the team. Similarly, Terlemez (2019) emphasized the importance of a coach's sports knowledge and exemplary behavior in leadership, highlighting the need to instill a sense of belonging and honesty in athletes.

It is known that a team's success depends more on the coach's personality traits than on the characteristics of the athletes, the team, or the environment (Karadağ, 2013). Based on the findings, it can be said that the positive personality traits of coaches (being successful, ambitious, determined, intelligent, constantly self-improving) are effective in the team's success. Studies show that coaches' knowledge, professional equipment, exemplary personality and leadership traits, and communication skills enhance communication, harmony, team unity, and success within the team (Mutlu, Akoğlu, Şentürk, Ağılönü, & Özbey, 2018; Onağ, Güzel, & Özbey, 2013; Usta, 2022).

Participants expressed that their coaches' leadership qualities are prominent. The themes that make coaches leaders in the eyes of the participants were found to be the effective use of technical knowledge, motivating the athlete, inspiring confidence, analyzing the athlete, discovering talents, being respected, and being humane. Yıldırım (2013) emphasized that athletes with a sense of confidence believe they have the physical and mental skills necessary to succeed in competitions. Therefore, in this research, athletes stated that they love their coaches for giving them confidence and consider them leaders. According to Terlemez (2019), it is important for a leader to adopt a motivating identity, consider the athlete as an individual, and provide the necessary relationship and environment. Understanding the athlete's problems, discovering their talents, contributing to their self-confidence, and striving for success within a framework of love and respect are fundamental qualities of a leader. Therefore, the principles expressed by Terlemez are similar to the themes mentioned in this research. In another study by Remzaninezhad and Keshtan (2009), it was found that the leadership qualities of football coaches are crucial for team success and harmony. Crust and Lawrence (2006) supported similar findings, stating that coaches with leadership qualities influence team unity and performance.

Yücel (2010) stated that a good coach should spend time with their athletes, know them very well, and meet their needs correctly. They should be not only a trainer but also a coach with positive personality traits who is there for their athletes during difficult times and personal issues. Furthermore, a coach should be a team leader, an example for athletes, and have a certain influence over them. Without the ability to convey their knowledge and experience, a coach cannot be successful. Therefore, a coach should continuously improve themselves, be open to changes, and maintain good and harmonious relationships with their athletes. Similar to Yücel's (2010) views, this research found that participants appreciated their coaches' qualities such as being competitive, ensuring unity and togetherness, being attentive, helpful, compassionate, fun, and supportive both materially and morally.

When athletes were asked how they react when their coaches make mistakes, some participants stated that they do not have any negative thoughts about their coaches when they make mistakes. They emphasized that their coaches are human and can make mistakes, and the important thing is to correct these mistakes. Some athletes mentioned that they do not act prejudiced when their coaches make mistakes and can easily discuss the situation with their coaches respectfully to resolve it. Some participants, however, expressed that it would upset them if a leader and competent individual makes mistakes. Some participants also stated that their coaches never make mistakes. Therefore, the research concluded that it is more important to ensure that mistakes are not repeated, lessons are learned from them, and there is an environment where coach-athlete communication can be maintained rather than focusing on the mistakes themselves. In Filiz's (2019) study titled "Preferences of Young Volleyball Players on Coach Behavior," similar results were found. Filiz found that young volleyball players prefer coaches who have good technical knowledge, encourage their development, identify and correct technical mistakes rather than coaches who simply praise and reward them.

When participants were asked about the aspects of their coaches they dislike, themes such as being overly ambitious, irritable, restrictive, speaking loudly, being overly planned and programmed, and being too compassionate emerged. While being ambitious is a positive trait necessary for success, excessive ambition can negatively impact an athlete's motivation and success. Similarly, being planned and programmed and being compassionate are positive behaviors for individuals, but being overly planned and overly compassionate can be viewed negatively by athletes. Tanrıverdi (2012) stated that the desire to win and being success-oriented can undermine moral values in sports environments and hinder fair play. Excessive ambition to win can sometimes lead to ignoring sports rules, causing coaches to exhibit aggressive, irritable, and disturbing behaviors. Another study by Gündendi and Keskin (2020) emphasized that coaches, who are responsible for all aspects of athletes' development, should appropriately motivate their athletes before, during, and after competitions. Otherwise, excessive ambition focused on winning can harm both the athlete's career and the team's success.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study has made a significant contribution to the literature by revealing how professional athletes perceive their coaches' personality traits. The findings indicate that athletes' expectations of their coaches are not limited to technical competence but also include a range of interpersonal and humanistic qualities. Athletes emphasized the importance of coaches who are trustworthy, motivational, have leadership qualities, are respected by others, use their technical knowledge effectively, and possess a compassionate personality. In addition, traits such as promoting team unity, being empathetic, and having a cheerful disposition were also positively evaluated by the athletes.

On the other hand, the findings also revealed that athletes viewed certain behavioral patterns in their coaches negatively. Athletes stated that excessively ambitious, irritable, or controlling attitudes hinder effective communication and reduce motivation. Furthermore, behaviors such as speaking loudly,

being overly rigid and structured, or displaying excessive compassion were found to exert psychological pressure on athletes, thereby weakening the quality of the coach-athlete relationship. Such traits, despite a coach's technical knowledge and experience, may obstruct the development of a trust-based relationship with athletes. These findings highlight that coaching behavior directly affects not only athletic performance but also the psychological interaction between coach and athlete.

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations can be made:

Coaching models should be restructured to emphasize not only technical success but also the quality of the relationship with athletes, leadership style, and sensitivity to individual differences.

Theoretical studies that explore not only positive leadership traits but also the impact of extreme or imbalanced behaviors should be increased; new theoretical frameworks should be developed to better understand the coach-athlete relationship.

Coach education programs should include topics such as empathy, communication, anger management, and emotional regulation alongside technical skills; these trainings should be delivered through interactive and practical methods.

Evaluation systems supported by athlete feedback should be developed to assess not only the sporting achievements of coaches but also their psychosocial contributions.

To promote balance in coaching behavior, in-service training should regularly include themes such as "effective leadership and relationship management."

In conclusion, the coach-athlete relationship is not confined to the technical aspects of training; human factors such as trust, communication, empathy, and balance play a decisive role in sustaining this relationship. Therefore, the coaching profession should be regarded as a holistic field that requires not only technical competence but also personal development, psychological awareness, and ethical sensitivity.

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