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Basic Psychological Needs and Mental Health Continuum in Sport: Exploring the Dynamics of Effective Decision Making

Sporda Temel Psikolojik İhtiyaçlar ve Ruh Sağlığı Sürekliliği: Sporda Etkili Karar Verme Dinamiklerinin Keşfi

Emre Bülent ÖĞRAŞ[1], Mehmet KARA[2], Mehmet Çağrı ÇETİN[3]

[1]Mersin Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Anabilim Dalı, Mersin, Türkiye
· **emrebulentogras@gmail.com** · ORCİD > 0000-0002-6327-2180

[2]Mersin Üniversitesi Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi, Mersin, Türkiye
· **mehmetkara@mersin.edu.tr** · ORCİD > 0000-0001-9454-5164

[3]Mersin Üniversitesi Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi, Mersin, Türkiye
· **mccetin80@gmail.com** · ORCİD > 0000-0001-7667-2143

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Sorumlu Yazar/Corresponding Author: Emre Bülent ÖĞRAŞ

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BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS AND MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM IN SPORT: EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

ABSTRACT

Psychological processes in athletes are considered to be as important as physical performance. In this context, the aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between psychological need states and mental health continuum in the intrinsic processes of athletes' effective decision-making. A total of 601 athletes, including 341 women and 260 men, voluntarily participated in the study. Research data were collected using the Scale of Effective Decision-Making in Sport, Psychological Need States in Sport Scale, and Sport Mental Health Continuum Short Form. According to the correlation analysis results, the strongest significant positive relationships were found between social well-being and psychological well-being (r = .78), and between social well-being and subjective well-being (r = .67). Regression analysis results, in which intrinsic decision-making was considered the predicted variable, revealed that autonomy (β = .120), competence (β = .338), and relatedness satisfaction (β = .222) had significant positive effects in the first model, whereas social well-being (β = .209) and psychological well-being (β = .336) had significant positive effects in the second model. As a result, it was determined that athletes' mental health continuum (R^2 = .31) and psychological need states (R^2 = .22) had significant and positive predictive roles on intrinsically effective decision-making skills. In line with these findings, it is recommended that greater emphasis should be placed on practices aimed at supporting psychological needs and strengthening mental health in sports settings in order to improve athletes' decision-making processes.

Keywords: Effective Decision Making, Intrinsic Decision Making, Psychological Needs States, Mental Health Continuum, Athlete.

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SPORDA TEMEL PSİKOLOJİK İHTİYAÇLAR VE RUH SAĞLIĞI SÜREKLİLİĞİ: SPORDA ETKİLİ KARAR VERME DİNAMİKLERİNİN KEŞFİ

ÖZ

Sporcularda psikolojik süreçlerin, fiziksel performans kadar önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir. Bu kapsamda çalışmanın amacı sporcuların etkili karar vermedeki içsel süreçlerinde; psikolojik ihtiyaç durumları ve ruh sağlığı sürekliliğinin

ilişkisinin araştırılmasıdır. Araştırmaya 341 kadın ve 260 erkek olmak üzere toplam 601 sporcu gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Araştırma verileri: Sporda Etkili Karar Verme Ölçeği, Sporda Psikolojik İhtiyaç Durumları Ölçeği ve Sporcu Ruh Sağlığı Sürekliliği formu kullanılmıştır. Korelasyon analizi sonuçlarına göre en yüksek düzeyde anlamlı pozitif ilişkiler sosyal iyi oluşla; psikolojik iyi oluş (r=.78) ve öznel iyi oluş (r=.67) arasında bulunmuştur. İçsel karar vermenin yordanan değişken olduğu regresyon analizi sonuçlarına göre ise; ilk modelde, özerklik (β=.120), yeterlik (β=.338) ve ilişkili olma tatmininin (β=.222), ikinci modelde ise sosyal iyi oluş (β=.209) ve psikolojik iyi oluşun (β=.336) anlamlı pozitif etkilere etkilere sahip olduğu saptanmıştır. Sonuç olarak sporcuların ruh sağlığı sürekliliğinin (R^2=.31) ve psikolojik ihtiyaç durumlarının (R^2=22), içsel etkili karar verme becerileri üzerinde anlamlı ve pozitif bir yordayıcı role sahip olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu doğrultuda, sporcuların karar verme süreçlerinin geliştirilmesinde psikolojik ihtiyaçların desteklenmesine ve ruh sağlığının güçlendirilmesine yönelik uygulamalara spor ortamlarında daha fazla yer verilmesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etkili Karar Verme, İçsel Karar Verme, Psikolojik İhtiyaç Durumları, Ruh Sağlığı Sürekliliği, Sporcu.

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INTRODUCTION

The realm of sports has evolved beyond merely testing physical performance, with psychological processes now recognized as critical determinants of athletic success. Athletes' psychological skills, alongside physical endurance, shape decision-making processes both on and off the field. Within this context, the sustainability of mental health and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs emerge as pivotal research areas in sport psychology. In competitive environments, how athletes respond to stress and make decisions influences not only immediate success but also the long-term sustainability of their careers (Andrews and Wilcox, 2014; Gantois et al., 2020). Research underscores that satisfying basic psychological needs enhances motivation, strategic decision-making, and resilience (Adie et al., 2008; Balaguer et al., 2012). Similarly, maintaining mental health continuum is crucial for sustained performance by supporting athletes' psychological well-being (Tingaz, 2022). Decision-making processes, which directly influence individual and team achievements, thus warrant closer investigation as they are integral to long-term success in sports (Çetin and Kara, 2024).

Basic psychological needs, as described by Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000), are fundamental to intrinsic motivation and include autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the need to act independently, which, when fulfilled, enhances intrinsic motivation and personal agency (Fragu-

ela-Vale et al., 2020). Competence reflects confidence in one's abilities to achieve tasks, fostering resilience and self-competence (Chen et al., 2015; Cardella et al., 2020). Relatedness pertains to forming meaningful social bonds, contributing to a sense of belonging and security (Kirkland et al., 2011; Baxter and Pelletier, 2019). Satisfying these needs not only strengthens motivation and well-being but also mitigates risks such as low self-esteem and social isolation (Ryan and Deci, 2008). In sports, autonomy supports strategic decision-making during competitions, competence builds confidence to face challenges, and relatedness promotes team cohesion and motivation (Morillo et al., 2018; Pacewicz et al., 2020). These elements collectively enhance athletes' performance and role within the team, marking their satisfaction as critical for decision-making processes.

Mental health continuum, defined as the capacity to maintain psychological balance and cope with stressors over time, encompasses subjective, social, and psychological well-being (Foster and Chow, 2019). Subjective well-being reflects emotional positivity and life satisfaction, enabling individuals to constructively handle stress (Angner, 2010). Social well-being relates to trust and belonging within relationships, reinforcing mental stability and resilience (Warner et al., 2016). Psychological well-being emphasizes realizing potential, achieving meaningful goals, and fostering a positive life outlook (Ryff and Singer, 2008). Together, these dimensions form a robust foundation for athletes' long-term mental health, supporting sustainable performance. Athletes with high subjective well-being exhibit positivity in training and competitions, while strong social bonds improve team dynamics and resilience (Watson and Brickson, 2019; Thompson and Schary, 2021). High psychological well-being directs athletes toward purposeful career goals, promoting deeper satisfaction and sustained success (Ghasempour et al., 2013; Foster and Chow, 2019). Exploring these dimensions in sports can reveal their role in enhancing performance and career longevity.

Effective decision-making, a dependent variable in this study, involves rational, strategic choices informed by knowledge, experience, and reflection (Lunenburg, 2010). It is categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic processes. Intrinsic decision-making aligns with personal values and motivations, fostering meaningful and consistent choices (Johnson, 1978). Conversely, external influences like coaches or social dynamics shape extrinsic decision-making, focusing on team alignment and environmental adaptation (Raab and Johnson, 2007). In sports, intrinsic processes help athletes make strategic, goal-oriented choices under pressure, while extrinsic processes strengthen team cohesion and role integration (Bar-Eli et al., 2011; Travassos et al., 2013). Balancing these processes is vital for individual and team success, enabling athletes to perform effectively in both domains.

The integration of basic psychological needs and mental health continuum significantly enhances decision-making processes. Autonomy fosters strategic and in-

dependent decision-making, while competence equips athletes with the confidence to face challenges. Relatedness strengthens team bonds, facilitating cooperative decision-making. Additionally, mental health continuum promotes resilience and flexibility in decision-making, supporting long-term performance. Athletes who fulfill these needs and maintain mental health exhibit greater self-confidence, motivation, and strategic thinking (Duncan, 2007; Fransen et al., 2020). Thus, understanding the interplay of these factors with decision-making processes is critical for advancing sport psychology theory and practice.

Despite existing research on decision-making in sports, there remains a gap in understanding the psychological mechanisms underpinning these processes. Most studies focus on performance outcomes or team dynamics without addressing how basic psychological needs and mental health continuum shape decision-making (Romeas et al., 2016; De Waelle et al., 2021). This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how satisfying autonomy, competence, and relatedness influences athletes' decision-making and how mental health continuum supports these processes. By addressing this gap, the research seeks to enrich sport psychology literature and offer practical insights for enhancing athletes' mental and strategic competencies.

The findings are expected to have significant implications for both academic and practical applications. The study will elucidate the psychological foundations of effective decision-making, highlighting the role of mental processes in sustaining individual and team success. For practitioners, the results can inform training programs that focus on mental health, motivation, and strategic skills, ensuring athletes are better equipped to handle stress and achieve long-term success. Ultimately, this research aims to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the psychological dynamics underpinning decision-making in sports, contributing to a deeper appreciation of the mental processes that drive sustained performance.

METHOD

Research Model

The current research was conducted using a correlational survey model. Correlational survey models, which are considered important for identifying relationships between variables, contribute to advancing knowledge through empirical research. Unlike traditional methods, correlational survey models offer comprehensive analyses (Gauthier et al., 2007). The aim of relational models is to provide researchers with exploration and detailed analysis between variables (Karasar, 2019).

Participants

The study's sample group comprises licensed athletes actively participating in sports in Türkiye. The study group, which was selected using the convenience sampling method among active individuals practicing sports, consists of 601 athletes, including 341 female (56.7%) and 260 male (43.3%) participants. In terms of sport type, 312 participants (51.9%) were engaged in team sports, whereas 289 participants (48.1%) were involved in individual sports. Detailed demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 2.

Data Collection Tools

Observations were obtained by using three measurement tools within the scope of the research.

The first measurement tool preferred within the scope of the research, The Scale of Effective Decision-Making in Sport, was developed by (Çetin and Kara, 2024) and consists of 15 items and 2 sub-dimensions. Intrinsic Decision Making sub-dimension consists of 7 items and external decision making consists of 8 items. However, within the scope of the study, only the intrinsic decision-making sub-dimension, which is thought to be more relevant to the psychological characteristics of athletes and suitable for the model, was preferred. In the original version of the scale, the Cronbach's alpha value of the Intrinsic Decision Making sub-dimension was .85, while this value was calculated as .87 in the study. The scale has a 5-point Likert structure (5: Strongly Agree, ..., 1: Strongly Disagree).

The other measurement tool used in the study is the Psychological Needs in Sport Scale. The scale was developed by Bhavsar et al. (2020) to determine the satisfaction and frustration levels of athletes' basic psychological needs, and its Turkish adaptation was conducted by Sarı et al. (2022). The Turkish form of the scale consists of 29 items and 6 sub-factors. However, only the sub-dimensions of autonomy satisfaction (5 items), competence satisfaction (5 items), and relatedness satisfaction (5 items), which were considered relevant to the research model, were included in the present study. The scale is structured in a 7-point Likert format (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). There are no reverse-coded items in the scale. Scores for each sub-dimension are calculated by summing the responses to the relevant items and dividing by the total number of items in that sub-dimension, resulting in an average sub-dimension score ranging from 1 to 7. Higher scores obtained from the satisfaction dimensions indicate a higher level of satisfaction of the related psychological need. In the Turkish adaptation study, the composite reliability (CR) coefficients were reported as .69 for autonomy satisfaction, .89 for competence satisfaction, and .85 for relatedness satisfaction.

The other measurement tool included in the study is the Sport Mental Health Continuum Short Form (Foster and Chow, 2019). The scale consists of 14 items and 3 sub-dimensions: Subjective Well-Being in Sport, Social Well-Being in Sport, and Psychological Well-Being in Sport. The scale consists of a 6-point Likert scale (0 = Never, 5 = Every Day). The scale was adapted into Turkish by Tingaz (2022). In the Turkish adaptation study, the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .92 for the overall scale, .83 for the Subjective Well-Being in Sport subscale, .84 for the Social Well-Being in Sport subscale, and .85 for the Psychological Well-Being in Sport subscale. There are no reverse-coded items in the scale, and the total score that can be obtained from the scale ranges between 0 and 70.

Table 1. Confirmatory factor analysis results for data collection tools

	CMIN/DF (x^2/df)	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
The Scale of Effective Decision-Making in Sport	64.4/14=4.6	.96	.94	.0336	.081
Psychological Needs in Sport Scale	22.6/5=4.52	.98	.97	.0384	.046
Sport Mental Health Continuum Short Form	491/97=5.06	.88	.86	.0506	.080

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results of the Intrinsic decision making sub-dimension of the scale of effective decision-making in sport; CMIN/DF ($_{x2}$/df): 4.6, CFI: .96, TLI: .94, SRMR: .033, RMSEA: .081 and Cronbach's Alpha (α) value was found as .87.

CFA results of the psychological needs in sport scale; CMIN/DF ($_{x2}$/df): 4.52, CFI: .98, TLI: .97, SRMR: .0384, RMSEA: .046. Cronbach's Alpha (α) values of the sub-dimensions; autonomy satisfaction: .73, competence satisfaction: .90 and relatedness satisfaction: .85.

CFA results of the sport mental health continuum short form; CMIN/DF (x2/df): 5.06, CFI: .88, TLI: .86, SRMR: .05, RMSEA: .080. Cronbach's Alpha (α) values of the sub-dimensions; subjective well-being: .81, social well-being: .87 and psychological well-being: .88.

Data Analysis

In the current study, observations were voluntarily obtained from 664 licensed athletes. The data collected through online Google Forms and face-to-face applications were initially analyzed for missing data and outliers. After analyzing the skewness and kurtosis values for the normality assumption, we excluded 51 out of the 664 missing observations and proceeded to analyze the remaining 601 observations. To ensure statistical significance, skewness and kurtosis values are lo-

oked at (Cain et al., 2017; Reineke et al., 2003). The mode, median, and arithmetic mean values were also examined. It was decided that the observation distribution was normal when it was within ± 2 (Tabachnick et al., 2013). Pearson correlation analysis and multiple linear regression analysis were performed, and with the descriptive statistics were calculated within the scope of the research.

Ethical Consideration

The Ethics Committee of Mersin University Faculty of Sports Sciences gave ethical approval for research permission with the date 14/10/2025 and number 054.

RESULTS

This part shows the percentage distributions of demographic information, such as gender, age, and athletic experience, along with the results of the studies that looked at how basic psychological needs and the mental health continuum affect how well athletes make decisions.

Table 2. Demographic information of the athletes according to gender, age, and duration of sportsmanship (n ; %)

Age		Sportmanship			Total
		1-5 years	6-10 years	11 and above	
Under 18	Female	158 79.0%	40 20.0%	2 1.0%	200
	Male	78 66.7%	33 28.2%	6 5.1%	117
	Total	236 74.4%	73 23.0%	8 2.5%	317
19-25 years	Female	44 34.6%	56 44.1%	27 21.3%	127
	Male	29 34.9%	30 36.1%	24 28.9%	83
	Total	73 34.8%	86 41.0 %	51 24.3%	210
26 and above	Female	6 42.9%	3 21.4%	5 35.7%	14
	Male	12 20.0%	10 16.7%	38 63.3%	60
	Total	18 24.3%	13 17.6%	43 58.1%	74
Total	Female	208 61.1%	99 29.0%	34 10.0%	341
	Male	119 45.8%	73 28.1%	68 26.2%	260
	Total	327	172	120	601

Table 3. Correlation analysis results for factors

N=601	X̄	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Autonomy Satisfaction	6.06	69	1	459**	.369**	.358**	.264**	.300**	.315**
2.Competence Satisfaction	6.41	.56		1	.539**	.513**	.372**	.428**	.467**
3.Relatedness Satisfaction	6.16	.72			1	.449**	.459**	.576**	.518**
4.Intrinsic Decision-Making	4.22	.54				1	.301**	.431**	.458**
5.Subjective Well-Being	3.90	.99					1	.674**	.663**
6.Social Well-Being	3.86	1.02						1	.787**
7.Psychological Well-Being	4.15	.84							1

**significant at p<0.01, *significant at p<0.05

The current study's correlation analysis, as presented in Table 3, revealed a positive and moderately significant relationship between the Autonomy Satisfaction sub-dimension and the Intrinsic Decision-Making (r =.358), Social Well-Being (r =.300), and Psychological Well-Being (r =.315) sub-dimensions, and a positive and low-level significant relationship between the Subjective Well-Being (r =.264) sub-dimension. The competence satisfaction sub-dimension and intrinsic decision-making sub-dimensions showed a positive and significant medium-level relationship (r =.513), while subjective well-being (r =.372), social well-being (r =.428), and psychological well-being (r =.467) showed a medium-level significant positive relationship. The study concluded that a significant positive relationship exists between relatedness satisfaction and intrinsic decision-making (r =.449), as well as between social well-being (r =.576) and psychological well-being (r =.518). Additionally, the study found a moderately positive and significant relationship between the intrinsic decision-making sub-dimension and the subjective (r =.301), social (r =.431), and psychological well-being (r =.458) sub-dimension.

Table 4. Predictors of ıntrinsic decision-making: a multiple linear regression approach (Model 1)

Model 1.								
Model	**B**	**±**	**(β)**	**T**	**p**	**Tolerance**	**VIF**	p=.000
Constant	.562	.224		2.510	.012			$F_{(3,597)=}$92.038
Autonomy Satisfaction	.094	.030	.120	3.120	.002	.768	1.301	D-W=1.949
Competence Satisfaction	.322	.041	.338	7.937	.000	.631	1.584	R=.562
Relatedness Satisfaction	.166	.030	.222	5.457	.000	.691	1.447	R^2=.316
								Adj.R^2=.313
Dependent Variable: Intrinsic Decision - Making								

Table 5. Predictors of ıntrinsic decision-making: a multiple linear regression approach (Model 2)

Model 2.								
Model	**B**	**±**	**(β)**	**T**	**p**	**Tolerance**	**VIF**	P=.000
Constant	3.039	.100		30.463	.000			F(3,597)=6.807
Subjective Well-Being	-.035	.028	-.063	-1.242	.215	.499	2.004	D-W=1.966
Social Well-Being	.110	.032	.209	3.386	.001	.340	2.943	R=.474
Psychological Well-Being	.215	.039	.336	5.507	.000	.349	2.867	R^2=.225
								Adj.R^2=.221
Dependent Variable: Intrinsic Decision - Making								

The research scope led to the creation of two distinct models for regression analysis (Table 4). In the first model, autonomy satisfaction, competence satisfaction, and relatedness satisfaction sub-dimensions of Psychological Needs in Sport are included in the model as independent variables, while subjective, social, and psychological well-being sub-dimensions of the Mental Health Continuum in Sport are included as independent variables in the second model.

The results of the multiple linear regression model indicate that the first model relies on intrinsic decision-making as a dependent variable, while autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction are considered independent variables.

Intrinsic Decision-Making^{1}*= 0.562 + (.120 autonomy) + (0.338 competence) + (0.222 relatedness)*

The mathematical equation of the second model, which is the second part of the multiple linear regression model, in which intrinsic decision making is dependent and subjective, social and psychological well-being are independent variables:

IntrinsicDecision-Making^{1}*=3.039+(-0.063)+(0.209social)+(0.336psychological)*

In evaluating the multicollinearity between the independent variables of the multiple linear regression analysis, VIF (variance inflation factor), which provides a criterion for researchers, and Tolerance values, which express high multicollinearity, were examined. Considering that examining these two values together gives clearer results (Marcoulides and Raykov, 2019; Raheem et al., 2019), VIF values above 4 or 5 and tolerance values below .10 indicate multicollinearity (Makrakis et al., 2024). Within the scope of the research, it was determined that there was no multicollinearity problem in both models (Reinhart, 2017). In addition, considering that Durbin-Watson (D-W) values, which reveal the autocorrelation status, should be between 1.5 and 2.5 (Kalaycı, 2006), no autocorrelation was found in the model (D-W=1.966).

In the multiple linear regression analysis conducted to determine the relationship between autonomy, competence and satisfaction with being related as independent variables within the scope of the first model and the dependent variable, ıntrinsic decision making, the first model was found to be statistically significant ($F(_{df=3,597})=92.038$, $p<0.001$). While the R^2 value of the model was .316 and the adjusted R^2 value was .313, 31% of the variance of athletes' ıntrinsic decision-making levels was explained by their psychological need states. When the Beta values of the first model were analyzed, it was found that autonomy (β=.120), competence (β=.338) and relatedness satisfaction (β=.222) had significant and positive effects.

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted within the framework of the second model to examine the relationship between the independent variables, namely the subjective, social, and psychological well-being sub-dimensions of the Mental Health Continuum, and the dependent variable, ıntrinsic decision-making. While the R^2 value of the second model ($F(_{df=3,597})=57.809$ $p<0.001$), which is statistically significant, is .225 and the adjusted R^2 value is .221, 22% of the variance of athletes' ıntrinsic decision-making levels is explained by athletes' mental health continuum. In addition, when the Beta values of the second model were analyzed, it was revealed that subjective well-being (β=-.063) was negative and statistically insignificant, while social well-being (β=.209) and psychological well-being (β=.336) provided statistically significant positive effects.

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study is to examine the effects of basic psychological needs and mental health continuum concepts on effective decision-making processes in sport and to make an original contribution to the sport psychology literature. The findings were evaluated by comparing them comprehensively with the existing literature and provided important data to fill the gaps in the literature. In particular, the research discusses the critical roles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction, as well as mental health continuum, in the decision-making processes of athletes from a broader perspective.

In the study, significant positive relationships were found between autonomy satisfaction and intrinsic decision-making (r = .358), social well-being (r = .300), and psychological well-being (r = .315). These findings suggest that autonomy satisfaction plays a determinant role in athletes' motivation and performance in line with (Deci and Ryan, 2000) Basic Psychological Needs Theory. Autonomy increases intrinsic motivation by allowing athletes to be free to control their behavior and make their own decisions (Deci and Ryan, 2011). Also emphasized the effects of autonomy satisfaction on individuals' decision-making processes (López-Walle et al., 2011; Sheldon et al., 2021). The social context reveals that autonomy satisfaction

enhances athletes' social well-being by bolstering their trust in social relationships (Kim and James, 2019). Similarly, the relationship between psychological well-being and autonomy satisfaction indicates that individuals acting based on their own values increases psychological resilience and balance (Edwards et al., 2021).

The lower relationship (r =.264) between subjective well-being and autonomy satisfaction indicates a limited link between these two variables. Broader environmental and individual factors may influence subjective well-being, which refers to individuals' general satisfaction with their lives (Diener, 2000). Therefore, although autonomy satisfaction contributes to subjective well-being, other factors may have a greater impact on this relationship. The study found significant positive relationships between competence satisfaction and internal decision-making (r =.513), subjective well-being (r =.372), social well-being (r =.428), and psychological well-being (r =.467). The role of competence satisfaction in internal decision-making processes reveals that individuals' confidence in their own abilities strengthens their decision-making skills. Self - Determination Theory suggests that competence satisfaction contributes to individuals making more strategic and confident decisions by increasing their intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2024). Competence satisfaction also supports athletes' social well-being by increasing the quality of their social relationships (Baumeister and Leary, 2017). Psychological well-being and competence satisfaction have a significant relationship (r =.467), suggesting a close link between competence perception and individuals' psychological resilience and balance. The positive correlations between relatedness satisfaction and intrinsic decision-making (r =.449) and social well-being (r =.576) indicate that social ties play a significant role in athletes' decision-making processes. The need for social connection has been shown to significantly support individuals' decision-making processes, as emphasized by (Ryan, 2017). Strengthening social ties can help athletes feel secure and make healthier decisions (O'Brien and Kilrea, 2021). Moreover, the high correlation between psychological well-being and relatedness satisfaction (r = .518) shows how athletes' social support systems strengthen their psychological balance.

In the multiple linear regression analysis conducted in the study, autonomy (β = .120), competence (β = .338), and relatedness satisfaction (β = .222) were found to have significant effects on internal decision-making processes. The fact that competence satisfaction has the highest beta value indicates that athletes' confidence in their own abilities is a determining factor in their decision-making processes (Vaughan et al., 2019). The effect of relatedness satisfaction emphasizes how social ties support athletes' internal decision-making skills.

The findings regarding the effects of the sub-dimensions of the mental health continuum on internal decision-making reveal significant positive effects of social well-being (β = .209) and psychological well-being (β = .336). Strong social ties

contribute to athletes making more effective decisions by drawing strength from social support mechanisms (Kim and James, 2019). A stronger effect of psychological well-being (β = .336) shows that individuals' feeling balanced and satisfied is determinant in decision-making processes (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). On the other hand, the insignificant effect of subjective well-being (β = -.063) on intrapersonal decision-making suggests that general life satisfaction may not be a direct determinant factor in these processes.

These findings clearly demonstrate the impact of psychological need satisfaction and the mental health continuum on athletes' decision-making processes in the field of sport psychology. In particular, social and psychological well-being are critical factors that support athletes' intrinsic decision-making skills. In this context, an approach that takes into account both athletes' physical performance and their social and psychological needs can provide an important roadmap for long-term success and sustainable performance.

LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations. First, the fact that the sample group consists of only licensed athletes in Turkey limits the generalizability of the findings. Further studies on athletes from different cultures may increase the applicability of the results to a wider context. Secondly, since the study was based on a cross-sectional design, it was not possible to determine the cause-and-effect relationships between variables. Longitudinal studies may provide a better understanding of the relationships over time. Thirdly, the use of only self-report methods in the data collection process creates a situation open to participant bias. Finally, the measurement tools used have a limited scope. For instance, we only assessed the three sub-dimensions of the Basic Psychological Needs Scale (autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction), as well as the internal decision-making dimension of the Effective Decision Making in Sport Scale. These limitations suggest the need for more comprehensive designs for future studies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights the critical impact of basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—and the mental health continuum on athletes' decision-making processes. The findings show that autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation and psychological balance, competence strengthens confidence and strategic decision-making, and relatedness fosters social and psychological well-being, supporting healthier choices.

Social and psychological well-being were identified as key contributors to effective decision-making, while subjective well-being played a more limited role. These results emphasize the need for a holistic approach that considers both the psychological and social dimensions of athlete development to ensure sustainable performance and long-term success.

The study's findings suggest that addressing athletes' psychological needs and ensuring continuous mental health support can enhance their intrinsic decision-making abilities. Psycho-educational programs focused on stress management and decision-making techniques may improve psychological skills. Additionally, counseling by sport pyschology consultant can foster emotional resilience and intrinsic motivation. Promoting participation in group and team activities may strengthen social cohesion among athletes. Lastly, regular psychological monitoring can help identify issues early and sustain effective decision-making.

Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Author Contribution Rates

This information will be written on the "Author Information Template" page in the first phase. After the peer review is completed, it will be written here.

Yazar Katkı Oranları

Design of Study: EBÖ (%40), MK (%40), MÇÇ (%20)

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