



An Examination of Football Coaches' Leadership Orientations and the Coach-Athlete Relationship

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the leadership orientations of football coaches and the coach-athlete relationship. The research was designed in accordance with the survey model, one of the quantitative research methods. The research group consists of football coaches working in Türkiye. In the research, the Demographic Information Form, the Multidimensional Leadership Orientations Scale, and the Coach-Athlete Relationship Inventory were used. Percentage and frequency values were used to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. The normality of the data distribution was evaluated by examining the skewness and kurtosis values using skewness and kurtosis tests. In this context, non-parametric tests such as Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests were used, and the relationships between variables were examined with Spearman correlation analysis and regression analysis. Significant differences were found between the participants' multidimensional leadership orientations and their income level and coaching license level. It was determined that the participants' coach-athlete relationship levels differed significantly according to their education level. When the relationships between the scales and sub-dimensions were examined; Statistically significant positive correlations were found at varying levels between the sub-dimensions of multidimensional leadership orientations and the sub-dimensions of the coach-athlete relationship. In conclusion, a significant relationship was determined between the leadership orientations of football coaches and the level of their coach-athlete relationship.

Key words: Football coach, Soccer player, Relationship, Leadership.

Futbol Antrenörlerinin Liderlik Yönelimleri ile Antrenör-Sporcu Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi

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Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, futbol antrenörlerinin liderlik yönelimleri ve antrenör-sporcu arasındaki ilişkisinin incelenmesidir. Araştırma, nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden tarama modeline uygun olarak tasarlanmıştır. Araştırma grubunu Türkiye'de görev yapan futbol antrenörleri oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada, Demografik Bilgi Formu ile birlikte Çok Boyutlu Liderlik Yönelimleri Ölçeği ve Antrenör-Sporcu İlişkisi Envanteri kullanılmıştır. Katılımcıların sosyo demografik özelliklerini tespit etmek amacıyla yüzde ve frekans değerlerinden yararlanılmıştır. Verilerin normal dağılıma uygunluğu skewness ve kurtosis testleri ile çarpıklık-basıklık değerleri incelenerek değerlendirilmiştir. Bu kapsamda parametrik olmayan testlerden Mann Whitney U ve Kruskal Wallis testleri kullanılmış, değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiler Spearman korelasyon analizi ve regresyon analizi ile incelenmiştir. Katılımcıların çok boyutlu liderlik yönelimleri ile gelir durumu ve antrenörlük lisansı düzeyi arasında anlamlı bir farklılık tespit edilmiştir. Katılımcıların antrenör-sporcu ilişki düzeylerinin eğitim durumuna göre anlamlı şekilde farklılaştığı belirlenmiştir. Ölçekler ve alt boyutlar arasındaki ilişkiler incelendiğinde; çok boyutlu liderlik yönelimleri alt boyutları ve antrenör-sporcu ilişkisi alt boyutları arasında farklı düzeylerde istatistiksel olarak pozitif ve anlamlı ilişkiler bulunmuştur. Sonuç olarak futbol antrenörlerinin liderlik yönelimleri ile antrenör-sporcu ilişki düzeyleri arasında anlamlı ilişki olduğu belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Futbol antrenörü, Futbolcu, İlişki, Liderlik.

Introduction

Football is a sport where, in addition to physical performance, effective leadership and strong communication skills also affect success. Football coaches' leadership orientations can have an impact on athletes' motivation levels, performance development and team harmony. Coaches can help their athletes effectively manage the challenges and setbacks associated with elite sports by fostering an environment characterized by supportive communication and nurturing practices (Karayel et al., 2024). Leadership is broadly defined as the process of providing a meaningful direction to individual/collective efforts and causing these efforts to be spent on achieving accepted and meaningful success norms. Leadership research in sports reveals that the role of coaches is not limited to authority and technical direction, but encompasses a multifaceted interactive process. Contemporary leadership approaches suggest that influence within teams stems not only from hierarchical power, but also from processes of identity building, relational cohesion, and collective meaning-making (Haslam et al., 2020; Farahbakhsh et al., 2025). The human resources framework defined by Bolman and Deal (2017) emphasizes meeting the needs of individuals and developing supportive relationships to provide effective learning environments. According to the four-frame leadership model developed by Bolman and Deal (1991), structural leadership emphasizes coordination and control, and advocates for placing employees in the right roles and relationships. Each framework offers a perspective for understanding leadership behavior and overcoming organizational challenges. This framework has proven useful in various educational settings. Under this framework, leadership prioritizes teacher development and well-being as the foundation of sustainable innovation (Alamoud, 2025). With rapidly changing relationships and technology, Bolman and Deal categorized leadership into four categories in 1991; this distinction was based on the fact that it was insufficient to possess characteristics of only one type of leader, and that a leader needed to possess multiple characteristics to adapt to change (Işık, 2021). Football has become one of the most watched and popular sports in the world today and as a result, it has gained an important place in the industrial sector. With the inclusion of science in this sport, where money is paid to watch and memberships are purchased, and the rapid development continues, the importance of athletes' performance increases, the importance of coaches who prepare athletes physically and mentally for competitions has also increased, and the need for qualified athletes and a leader coach who is equipped in every way has begun (Yıldız and Altınok, 2021). Leadership is a structure that enhances an organization's existence through processes such as motivating its building blocks, environmental and individual analyses, decision-making ability, telecommunication, and control (Er and Koç, 2020). Bolman and Deal's four Frames Model addresses leadership behaviors in a multidimensional way. Based on this, structural leadership includes training planning and organization, people-oriented leadership includes athlete relations and motivation, political leadership includes intra-team and intra-club power dynamics, and symbolic/charismatic leadership includes inspiration and team culture building processes.

Considering that coaches are not only individuals who impart technical and tactical knowledge, but also leaders who provide motivation, manage conflicts, build team identity, and support the individual development of athletes, this multi-dimensional approach is thought to offer an important theoretical foundation in the context of sports. In this context, leadership transcends

administrative functions and transforms into a multidimensional process integrating structural, human, political, and symbolic dimensions (Bratja, 2025). Accordingly, examining the leadership orientations of football coaches and their interaction with the coach-athlete relationship, within the framework of this theoretical context, aims to contribute to filling the gap in the literature. Coaching is a face-to-face type of leadership. It connects individuals with various backgrounds, skills, and experiences. As a leader, coaches help athletes take responsibility and experience success. Coaching involves valuing people, believing in them, approaching them, and truly appreciating them, rather than making football players memorize technical skills or come up with perfect game plans. It is the process of guiding individuals or groups to achieve goals. The way a coach interacts with their athletes—through their behavior, guidance, decisions, and conflict resolution processes—plays a crucial role in shaping team Dynamics (Francisco et al., 2022). As in any field, outstanding leaders emerge in sports education environments, in the world of sports, and there are many coaches who have demonstrated great leadership capacity. Leadership is considered as a behavioral process, the influence of individuals and groups towards achieving set goals (Acet et al., 2017; Shehu et al., 2019). Leadership in the sport environment is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct in which competence is a product of the leader's behavior, situational characteristics, and aspects of the group environment (Jooste and Kubayi, 2018). Understanding how the leadership styles of football coaches shape their relationship with the athlete is important for field applications. Leadership involves influencing athletes to achieve a common goal and facilitating conditions and environments that will help achieve this goal. Much of current research on coach leadership utilizes Smoll and Smith's (1989) Model of Sport Leadership Behaviors. This model is based on the assumption that the effectiveness of leadership depends on athletes' perceptions and recall. The model posits that coach leadership is perceived individually by players, and that these perceptions are as important as the coach's actual behavior for the outcome of a coach's actions (Holopainen et al., 2026). Research in the field of sports psychology shows that coaches' transformational leadership is associated with higher motivation and performance levels, improved development and skill acquisition, increased well-being, increased satisfaction, decreased aggression, increased task/team harmony, and an increased willingness to make personal sacrifices for the good of the team (Ekstrand et al., 2018). Coach leadership is an important factor in shaping team competitiveness and cohesion, and in developing and maintaining individual players' confidence, team identification, and proactivity (Arthur and Lynn, 2016; Fransen et al., 2020; Haddad et al., 2022). Athletes have interpersonal relationships with a variety of people in sports, including teammates, parents, coaches, and staff members. In fact, elite athletes spend more time with their coaches than with their parents. The quality of the athlete's relationship with the coach is very important and directly affects the athletes' skill development and competitive performance (Jowett, 2017; Jin et al., 2022). Effective leadership is crucial for establishing a clear vision and goals for a sports organization or team. A strong leader can articulate a compelling vision for the future, motivate team members to work towards a common objective, and develop a roadmap to Success (Wu, 2023). The coach-athlete relationship was defined by Jowett and Poczwardowski (2007) as “a situation in which the cognitions, emotions, and behaviors of a coach and an athlete are mutually and causally interconnected.” This process includes not only the individual's technical and tactical knowledge during the coaching period, but also the interaction and communication

they establish with athletes. The relationship that coaches with effective leadership skills establish with athletes becomes an effective factor in terms of motivation and psychosocial development. The quality of the coach-athlete relationship plays a critical role in the development and success of the athlete. Positive communication processes and strong relationships between coach and athlete not only increase the motivation of athletes, but also affect their satisfaction levels. At the same time, it creates a suitable environment that allows them to develop their skills (Altıntaş et al., 2012). The quality of the coach-athlete relationship is evaluated by perceiving three basic components: commitment, closeness, and complementarity. The desire of the coach and athlete to maintain their athletic relationship in the long term is commitment, the parties' trust, care, value, and respect for each other is closeness, and the degree to which the parties' behaviors are mutual and collaborative is expressed as complementarity. A high perception of these components provides a more positive evaluation of the coach-athlete relationship (Wekesser et al., 2021). An inadequate or negative coach-athlete relationship brings various problems. If the relationships established between the coach and the athlete, such as communication, trust, respect, honesty, and motivation, are not measured, a healthy coach-athlete relationship may not be formed (Büyükbasmacı, 2024). A leading coach sets realistic goals and objectives for the team they have formed. They know how to achieve these goals, what can be done, and what the rewards will be, and they act accordingly. They never show despair towards the athlete(s) (Hanayoğlu et al., 2023). In this context, understanding the factors affecting the quality of the relationship between the coach and the athlete is of critical importance in increasing individual and team performance. The literature contains numerous studies that extensively examine the relationship between coach leadership and athlete motivation. However, studies that comprehensively address coaches' leadership orientations and the coach-athlete relationship specifically in football are limited. This study aims to investigate the effects of examining the relationship between these two variables on athlete development. In this context, examining the interaction between coach leadership characteristics and the coach-athlete relationship is considered a theoretical and practical necessity. Since the aim of the research was to examine coaches' leadership orientations in a broader context from a multidimensional perspective, it was emphasized that the general leadership approach offers a more comprehensive framework. This research aims to evaluate the effects of the coaching process on athlete development by examining the leadership orientations of football coaches and the coach-athlete relationship.

Materials and Methods

Research Model

The current research was conducted to determine the correlation between the leadership orientations of football coaches and coach-athlete relationships, and was designed as a descriptive and correlation-seeking type conducted in accordance with the screening model of quantitative research methods. In survey models, the phenomena that constitute the subject of a study are described as they are. There is no question of influencing or altering the subjects. It is important to conduct the observation appropriately (Karasar, 2009).

Research Group

The study group of the current study consists of football coaches in Turkey. The study employed a simple random sampling method. In simple random sampling, participants to be included in the research are selected randomly. This method ensures that participants have an equal probability of participating in the research process, and the study population is homogeneous. (Yağar and Dökme, 2018). According to the records of the Turkish Football Federation (TFF); there are 33,721 licensed football coaches in Turkey. Data collection was carried out through an online survey system with coaches who participated in coaching courses during the 2025-2026 football season. Before data collection, participants were informed of the study's purpose and provided their informed consent. The research was conducted in accordance with ethical standards. According to the known universe sampling method, 380 people were needed with a 95% confidence interval and 5% error margin. Considering the license numbers, the surveys were sent to the selected people via e-mail in equal numbers according to the simple random sampling method. 373 people gave feedback to the research surveys. In the study where there was no missing or incorrect data, it was understood that 311 people met the inclusion criteria for the sample and the current study was completed with 311 people (n=311). Based on the estimated sample size tables from Bartlett et al. (2011) and Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan (2004), it was determined that 311 people would be sufficient for the sample from a population size of 33721.

Data Collection Tools

In this study, data collection was carried out using a Demographic Information Form, the Multidimensional Leadership Orientations Scale (MLOS), and the Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q), in accordance with the study's objectives. Data collection was conducted through an online survey system, and participation was voluntary. Before completing the survey, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain confidential. The average time to complete the survey was 10 minutes.

Demographic Information Form

This form, created in line with the literature, was prepared to collect information about the coaches' gender, age, experience, income status, education status, coaching license level and the category in which they work.

Multidimensional Leadership Orientations Scale (MLOS)

In this study, the Multidimensional Leadership Orientations Scale (MLOS) was chosen to evaluate the behavioral and multidimensional aspects of leadership. In line with the research objective, it was deemed more appropriate to use a measurement tool that directly reveals leadership behaviors. MLOS; It was developed by Dursun et al. (2019) to measure the leadership orientations of individuals. This scale, consisting of 19 items, is a 5-point Likert-type scale and consists of four sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions are political leadership, human-resource leadership, charismatic leadership and structural leadership. There is no reverse-scored item in the scale. High scores obtained from the sub-dimensions of the scale indicate that the individual's tendency towards that leadership orientation is high. While the Cronbach alpha coefficient calculated for the overall scale was calculated as .85, the sub-

dimensions were calculated as .80; .73; .74; .72, respectively (Dursun et al., 2019). The internal consistency coefficients of the current research are given in Table 2.

Coach-Athlete Relationship Inventory (ASIE)

ASIE; It was developed by Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004) and the psychometric properties of the Turkish version were tested by Altıntaş et al. (2012). The inventory has two forms consisting of 11 statements for both athletes and coaches. The scale, which consists of a 7-point Likert type, consists of three sub-dimensions: closeness, commitment and complementarity. The internal consistency coefficients for the coach form of the scale, which was developed to evaluate the nature of the coach-athlete relationship, were calculated as .74 for the closeness sub-dimension; .78 for the commitment sub-dimension and .69 for the complementarity sub-dimension (Altıntaş et al., 2012). The internal consistency coefficients of the current research are given in Table 2.

Data Analysis

The data of the current study were analyzed using the IBM SPSS 31 package program. Descriptive statistics were used in the analyses. For the conformity of the data to normal distribution, the skewness-kurtosis values and the Kolmogorov Smirnov test results were examined. For the skewness-kurtosis values, the ± 1.5 range was taken into account, and it was understood that the data were not in this reference range (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). In the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality analysis, it was understood that the data did not meet the normal distribution assumption ($p > 0.05$). In this direction, non-parametric tests were applied in the analyses. Mann Whitney U tests were performed for binary groups, and Kruskal Wallis tests were performed for more than two variables. In this context, the negative impact of high kurtosis values on the analysis results was avoided. The fact that non-parametric tests are not sensitive to the distribution assumption supports the statistical reliability of the findings. Spearman Correlation analysis was applied for the relationship between the concepts. Tukey test was used for the difference between the groups. The significance level in the analyses was determined as .05 and 0.01. A simple linear regression analysis was applied to determine the predictive effect of leadership level on ASIE. The analysis results were evaluated with a significance level of $p < .05$.

Ethical Aspects of the Research

Throughout this research, the "Guidelines for Scientific Research and Publication Ethics in Higher Education Institutions" have been followed and was approved by the Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee with the decision numbered E-74555795-050.04-1229633 and dated 2025/111.

Findings

Table 1: Distribution of Demographic Characteristics of Coaches

		f	%	$\bar{x} \pm SD$
Gender	Male	311	100,0	
Age				41,50 $\pm$ 9,20
Coaching Experience (years)				9,80 $\pm$ 6,66
Educational Status	High school and below	153	49,2	
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	158	50,8	
Income Level	Low	33	10,6	
	Medium	262	84,2	
	High	16	5,1	
Coaching License	TFF C	34	10,9	
	UEFA C	35	11,3	
	UEFA B	111	35,7	
	UEFA A	52	16,7	
	UEFA KALECİ B	79	25,4	
Category Studied	Academy	152	48,9	
	First Team	159	51,1	
Total		311	100,0	

The demographic characteristics of the coaches participating in the study are presented in Table 1. The average age of the coaches participating in the study was 41.50 (± 9.20) and all were male. The participants had 9.80 (± 6.66) years of coaching experience, 50.8% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 84.2% had a medium income. It was determined that 51.1 of the coaches were working in the A team, while 35.7% had a UEFA B coaching license.

Table 2: Distributions of Scale Scores (n=311)

Scales	Min	Max	Mean	Sd.	Skew	Kur.	α
Multidimensional Leadership Orientations Scale (MLOS)	21,00	95,00	78,94	10,69	-2,07	8,44	,93
Political Leadership	5,00	25,00	19,86	3,31	-1,16	3,05	,84
Human-resource leadership	6,00	25,00	21,63	2,91	-2,39	9,43	,81
Charismatic Leadership	5,00	25,00	20,08	3,30	-1,54	4,80	,84
Structural Leadership	4,00	20,00	17,35	2,62	-2,29	7,95	,77
Coach-Athlete Relationship Inventory (ASIE)	1,00	7,00	6,32	0,86	-3,42	16,67	,88
Closeness	1,00	7,00	6,56	0,87	-3,98	20,23	,84
Commitment	1,00	7,00	5,78	1,20	-1,12	1,40	,63
Complementarity	1,00	7,00	6,48	0,89	-3,71	18,58	,75

Table 2 shows the score distributions of the scales used. According to the table, the average score obtained from MLOS was 78.94 (± 10.69), the highest average was obtained in the

“Human Resource Leadership” sub-dimension (21.63 ± 2.91). While the average obtained from ASIE was $6.32 (\pm .86)$, the highest was obtained in the “Closeness” sub-dimension ($6.56 \pm .87$). The skewness and kurtosis values of all continuous variables varied between $+20$; -3 . While the Cronbach Alpha coefficient calculated for the overall MLOS was determined as .93, the sub-dimensions took values between .77-.84. While the internal consistency coefficient for the overall ASIE was calculated as .88, the sub-dimensions were calculated as .84, .63 and .75, respectively. In the literature, values in the range of 0.60–0.70 are considered acceptable, especially in social sciences and exploratory studies. The relatively low reliability coefficient obtained in the commitment sub-dimension is thought to be due to perceptual differences specific to the sample group of football coaches. This has been added to the limitations section of the study, and it is suggested that the scale be retested with different sample groups in future research.

Table 3: Mann Whitney U Test Results According to Educational Status

	Educational Status	n	$\bar{X}_{\text{Rank}}$	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
MLOS	High school and below	153	163,77	25.057	-1,501	,133
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	158	148,47	23.459		
Political Leadership	High school and below	153	166,03	25.402	-1,949	,051
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	158	146,29	23.113		
Human-resource leadership	High school and below	153	162,98	24.935	-1,363	,173
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	158	149,24	23.580		
Charismatic Leadership	High school and below	153	159,54	24.409	-0,689	,491
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	158	152,57	24.106		
Structural Leadership	High school and below	153	162,13	24.805	-1,202	,229
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	158	150,07	23.710		
ASIE	High school and below	153	173,69	26.574	-3,440	,001*
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	158	138,87	21.942		
Closeness	High school and below	153	171,19	26.192	-3,325	,001*
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	158	141,29	22.324		
Commitment	High school and below	153	167,83	25.678	-2,330	,020*
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	158	144,54	22.837		
Complementarity	High school and below	153	171,09	26.177	-3,174	,002*
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	158	141,38	22.338		

$p < 0,05^*$

Table 3 shows the results of the Mann Whitney U test conducted to determine the differences between the leadership styles and the coach-athlete relationship according to the education level of the coaches. According to the findings; no statistically significant difference was found between the education level of the coaches and the leadership styles ($p > 0.05$). A statistically

significant difference was found between the ASIE total score ($Z=-3.440$; $p=.001$), Closeness ($Z=-3.325$; $p=.001$), Commitment ($Z=-2.330$; $p=.020$) and Complementarity sub-dimensions ($Z=-3.174$; $p=.002$) according to the education level. It was found that the coach-athlete relationship of individuals with high school and below education level was higher than the others.

Table 4: Kruskal Wallis Test Results According to Income Level

	Income Level	n	$\bar{X}_{Rank}$	df	X^2	p
MLOS	Low ^a	33	160,59	2	8,617	,013*
	Medium ^b	262	151,57			
	High ^c	16	219,09			
Political Leadership	Low ^a	33	165,09	2	11,154	,004*
	Medium ^b	262	150,58			
	High ^c	16	226,06			
Human-resource leadership	Low ^a	33	149,08	2	2,162	,339
	Medium ^b	262	154,99			
	High ^c	16	186,84			
Charismatic Leadership	Low ^a	33	145,23	2	7,105	,029*
	Medium ^b	262	153,89			
	High ^c	16	212,72			
Structural Leadership	Low ^a	33	174,67	2	9,505	,009*
	Medium ^b	262	150,11			
	High ^c	16	214,00			
ASIE	Low ^a	33	151,30	2	0,195	,907
	Medium ^b	262	156,15			
	High ^c	16	163,16			
Closeness	Low ^a	33	156,47	2	3,681	,159
	Medium ^b	262	158,20			
	High ^c	16	119,03			
Commitment	Low ^a	33	152,44	2	2,204	,332
	Medium ^b	262	154,51			
	High ^c	16	187,75			
Complementarity	Low ^a	33	133,35	2	2,804	,246
	Medium ^b	262	158,50			
	High ^c	16	161,72			

$p<0,05^*$

In Table 4, statistically significant differences were found between the total score of the MLOS ($X^2=8.617$; $p=.013$), Political Leadership ($X^2=11.154$; $p=.004$), Charismatic Leadership ($X^2=7.105$; $p=.029$) and Structural Leadership sub-dimensions ($X^2=9.505$; $p=.009$) according to the income level of the coaches. However, no significant difference was found between the Human Resource Leadership sub-dimension of the MLOS ($p>0.05$). In the political leadership sub-dimension, the mean score of the coaches with a medium income was found to be higher than the coaches with a high income. No significant difference was found between the total score of the ASIE, Closeness, Commitment and Complementarity sub-dimensions according to the income level ($p>0.05$).

Table 5: Kruskal Wallis Test Results According to Coach License Status

	Coaching License	n	$\bar{X}_{Rank}$	df	X^2	p
MLOS	TFF C	34	171,49	4	2,609	,625
	UEFA C	35	167,54			
	UEFA B	111	154,90			
	UEFA A	52	155,85			
	UEFA KALECI B	79	145,87			
Political Leadership	TFF C	34	189,84	4	9,702	,046*
	UEFA C	35	171,41			
	UEFA B	111	152,94			
	UEFA A	52	158,96			
	UEFA KALECI B	79	136,96			
Human-resource leadership	TFF C	34	153,93	4	1,061	,900
	UEFA C	35	158,01			
	UEFA B	111	149,72			
	UEFA A	52	161,24			
	UEFA KALECI B	79	161,37			
Charismatic Leadership	TFF C	34	170,00	4	4,966	,291
	UEFA C	35	162,40			
	UEFA B	111	164,92			
	UEFA A	52	146,03			
	UEFA KALECI B	79	141,17			
Structural Leadership	TFF C	34	162,90	4	1,554	,817
	UEFA C	35	164,60			
	UEFA B	111	148,04			
	UEFA A	52	158,86			
	UEFA KALECI B	79	158,53			
ASIE	TFF C	34	170,91	4	6,291	,178
	UEFA C	35	179,59			
	UEFA B	111	148,86			
	UEFA A	52	138,63			
	UEFA KALECI B	79	160,61			
Closeness	TFF C	34	158,94	4	3,392	,495
	UEFA C	35	171,33			
	UEFA B	111	156,17			
	UEFA A	52	140,49			
	UEFA KALECI B	79	157,92			
Commitment	TFF C	34	185,09	4	7,079	,132
	UEFA C	35	172,29			
	UEFA B	111	144,51			
	UEFA A	52	149,41			
	UEFA KALECI B	79	156,75			

Complementarity	TFF C	34	148,79	4	3,774	,437
	UEFA C	35	171,59			
	UEFA B	111	155,84			
	UEFA A	52	140,73			
	UEFA KALECI B	79	162,47			

p<0,05*

The Kruskal Wallis Test results between the leadership styles and the coach-athlete relationship according to the undergraduate level of the coaches are given in Table 5. A statistically significant difference was found between the MLOS Political leadership ($X^2=9.702$; $p=.046$) according to the undergraduate level of the coaches. However, no difference was found between the groups in the Post hoc analysis. No statistically significant difference was found between the MLOS total score and its sub-dimensions and the ASIE and its sub-dimensions ($p>0.05$).

Table 6: Correlation Results

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11
F1	1										
F2	,58**	1									
F3	-,08	-,04	1								
F4	-,10	-,06	,88**	1							
F5	,05	,03	,77**	,55**	1						
F6	-,14*	-,11	,85**	,72**	,55**	1					
F7	-,05	,01	,77**	,64**	,55**	,53**	1				
F8	-,01	-,14*	,48**	,40**	,48**	,42**	,37**	1			
F9	,09	-,00	,36**	,31**	,40**	,26**	,30**	,71**	1		
F10	-,08	-,15**	,44**	,35**	,44**	,40**	,35**	,89**	,49**	1	
F11	,07	-,08	,35**	,30**	,34**	,32**	,24**	,74**	,49**	,48**	1

F1: Age, F2: Experience, F3: MLOS, F4: Political Leadership, F5: Human-resource leadership, F6: Charismatic Leadership, F7: Structural Leadership, F8: ASIE, F9: Closeness, F10: Commitment, F11: Complementarity, **p<,01 *p<,05

The results of the correlation test between the cases in the study are presented in Table 6. According to the findings; A negative and low level significant relationship was found between the age of the coaches and the MLOS Charismatic Leadership sub-dimension ($r=-.14$; $p<0.05$). A negative and low level significant relationship was found between the experience of the coaches and the ASIE total score ($r=-.14$; $p<0.05$) and the Commitment sub-dimension ($r=-.15$; $p<0.01$). When the relationships between the scales and sub-dimensions were examined, statistically significant positive relationships were found at different levels between the MLOS and its sub-dimensions and the ASIE and its sub-dimensions ($p<0.01$). Detailed information on the correlation results is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Effect of MLOS Level on ASIE

Variable	B	Standart Error	β	t	p
Constant	2.262	.282	-	8.033	.001
MLOS	.051	.004	.638	14.549	.001

Model Summary: $R = .638$, $R^2 = .407$, Düzeltilmiş $R^2 = .405$, $F(1,309) = 211.666$, $p < .001$

The simple linear regression analysis revealed that the leadership level had a statistically significant effect on ASIE ($F(1, 309) = 211.666$, $p < .001$). When the explanatory power of the model was examined, it was found that the MLOS variable explained 40.7% of the total variance in ASIE ($R^2 = .407$). When the regression coefficients were evaluated, it was determined that the MLOS variable was a positive and significant predictor of ASIE ($\beta = .638$, $t = 14.549$, $p < .001$). Accordingly, it can be said that an increase in leadership level leads to an increase in ASIE level.

Discussion and Conclusion, Suggestions

Football is a sport where team dynamics, strategic planning and leadership skills have a significant impact rather than individual talents. It is not enough for coaches to have only technical and tactical knowledge. At the same time, they play an important role in increasing the motivation and performance of athletes by establishing strong communication and interaction with their athletes. In this context, the leadership orientation of football coaches can directly affect the quality of their communication with athletes. The purpose of the study is to examine the effect of coaches' leadership approaches on the coach-athlete relationship. The findings obtained in the study provide significant contributions to the process of developing coaches' leadership skills. On the other hand, it can help to better support athletes' psychology and performance. 311 football coaches participated in the study. The average age of the coaches participating in the study is 41.50 (± 9.20). The participants' coaching experience is 9.80 (± 6.66) years, 50.8% of them have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 84.2% of them have a medium level of income. It was determined that 51.1% of the coaches were working in the A team, while 35.7% had a UEFA B coaching license. When the research findings were examined, no significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions of the MLOS according to their education levels. A significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions of the ASI scale according to the education levels of the participants. In the study conducted by Sargın and Güleşçe (2022), a significant difference was found between the level of education and multi-dimensional leadership orientations. It can be thought that coaches with a higher level of education may be more competent in communicating more effectively with their athletes and developing empathy. Academic education can enable coaches to learn more about psychology, pedagogical approaches and motivation techniques. In the study conducted by Dumangöz and Çavuşoğlu (2021), no significant difference was found between the education levels of the coaches and the coach-athlete relationship. Adie and Jowett (2010) found that when the closeness, commitment and complementarity characteristics in the coach-athlete relationship are high, the sports environment is perceived by athletes as a mastery climate, and when they are low, it is perceived as a performance climate. In the study conducted by Mutlu et al. (2019) and Özalp and Arıkan (2023), no statistically significant difference was found between the leadership tendencies of coaches according to their education level. Coaches can become aware

of their responsibilities and contribute new skills to provide contemporary training methods. It was also considered that coaches with lower levels of education having a higher level of relationship with athletes may be related to their field experience, long-term practical knowledge, and development of more natural and experience-based approaches in communication. In Table 4, a significant difference was found between the participants' MLOS sub-dimensions and income status. However, no significant difference was found between the ASIE sub-dimensions and income status. In the study conducted by Çetintaş and Türkmen (2020), a significant difference was found between the income level of karate coaches and their leadership orientations. However, in the study conducted by Ateş (2023), no significant difference was found between the income level and the leadership orientations of coaches. The results of the research in the literature are similar and different. Coaches with a high income level may have the opportunity to receive more professional training, participate in development programs and renew themselves. This may make their leadership styles more conscious and versatile. Coaches with a high income level may have more educational opportunities. According to the analysis results, a significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions of the MLOS according to the participants' undergraduate status. However, no significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions of the ASIE and the coach license. In the study conducted by Çeyiz (2007), a relationship was found between the leadership styles of the coaches and the types of licenses they have. It is stated that the education and license levels of the coaches can directly affect their leadership styles (Chelladurai and Saleh, 1980; Jowett and Cockerill, 2003). It is emphasized in the literature that coaches with lower undergraduate levels may prefer traditional, authoritarian and less flexible methods in their leadership approaches (Smith & Smoll, 2007). A negative and low level significant relationship was found between the age of the participants and the charismatic leadership sub-dimension of the MLOS. A negative and low level significant relationship was found between the experience of the coaches and the commitment sub-dimension of the ASIE. Statistically significant relationships were found between the sub-dimensions of the scales. Studies conducted by Horn (2008) show that leadership styles have significant effects on athlete performance, motivation and psychological well-being. Successful coaches in sports state that the relationships between themselves and their environment positively influence athletes' performance. Leadership in sports requires mastering various personal and technical skills (Kendirli et al., 2022). Table 7 shows that the level of leadership has a significant and positive effect on ASIE. The fact that the leadership variable explains a significant portion of the variance in ASIE (40.7%) reveals that leadership is a strong predictor of this variable. In this context, it can be said that developing leadership skills is a significant element in increasing the ASIE level for practitioners and researchers. Activities aimed at improving coaches' leadership skills can help create a more positive and team-oriented relationship between them and their athletes.

As a result, the multi-faceted leadership tendencies of football coaches and the levels of coach-athlete relationship vary according to socio-demographic characteristics. This study has several limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, the sample size in this research is limited to only 311 male soccer coaches. This sample size may restrict the generalization of the research findings to a wider population. Further research with larger and more diverse samples is needed to confirm these results and ensure that the findings are applicable to various contexts and

different groups of athletes. Considering that the coach-athlete relationship plays an important role in achieving the desired performance from the athlete, it is thought that as the time athletes spend with their coaches increases, they get to know each other better, and the cooperation they have in achieving success, as well as the disappointment and reactions they experience in case of failure, play an important role in the negative direction of communication between the coach and the athlete and in the decrease of the coach leadership behaviors desired by the athletes. The most important way to produce successful athletes is through a strong and effective understanding of interaction within the group being led (Özbey and Yılmaz, 2021; Akgül and Gül, 2022). Effective leadership in sports is a process that depends on the interaction between the coach's leadership behaviors, the players' personal characteristics, and situational factors (Kim and Cruz, 2022). Raising awareness among sports stakeholders about the importance of developing long-term relationships between athletes and coaches is valuable for improving the overall quality of these relationships and enhancing athletes' motivation in sports (Subijana et al., 2023). While the leadership tendencies of football coaches vary depending on their economic and professional development levels, it can be concluded that the level of coach-athlete relationship is related to academic background. In their career development, coaches should not only give importance to technical and tactical skills, but also to financial stability and academic education. In the context of football, charismatic/symbolic leadership is evaluated as the coach's ability to inspire athletes, strengthen team spirit, foster unity around common goals, and serve as a role model through on-field and off-field behavior. It is believed that this dimension of the scale reflects an important aspect of the leadership behaviors of football coaches. Future studies may benefit from utilizing leadership measurement tools specific to the context of sports. Training programs should be increased to develop the leadership skills of coaches. Leadership modules should be expanded in all categories, especially in coaching training. The feasibility of implementing concrete recommendations for enhancing leadership and creativity in sports management practices is critical to the sustainable success of both individuals and organizations. Incentives should be provided to improve the income levels of coaches. Coaches should receive training in communication and leadership. This training should support the development of fundamental skills such as empathy, active listening, understanding athletes' emotions, and calmly managing conflicts (Akyıldız and Kusan, 2025). Sports psychology, communication skills and leadership approaches should be emphasized more in coach training processes. Training and seminars for continuous professional development should be organized. Well-planned training programs are effective in showing coaches how to be successful leaders. Therefore, coaches should participate in courses, seminars, conferences, training, and educational activities. Furthermore, since the interaction between coaches and athletes affects the team's success, it is necessary to develop the most effective communication methods. In the next studies to be conducted in the literature, the relationship between leadership tendencies and sports success can be measured. The athlete relations and leadership tendencies of coaches in different sports branches can be compared. Studies can be conducted to separately address the age categories in which coaches work.

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Both authors contributed equally throughout all stages of the research.

Conflict Declaration

The authors have no statement of conflict regarding the research.

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