



## Self-confidence level in professional athletes; an examination of exposure to violence, branch and socio-demographic aspects

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether or not the self-confidence levels of the athletes working as professionals show a significant difference by the variables such as age, gender, number of years spent doing sports, duration of professional working life, exposure to violence, sports branch worked, economic situation and education level. To this end, 607 athletes in total, 265 (43,7%) of whom were female and 342 (56,3%) of whom were male working professionally in 9 branches including wrestling, arm wrestling, football, judo, basketball, volleyball, handball, athletics and weightlifting in 11 provinces of Turkey in total including İstanbul, Kocaeli, Ankara, Sakarya, Aydın, Bilecik, Samsun, Kayseri, Kütahya, Hatay and Eskişehir were included in the scope of the study. The study was conducted for two years in 2012 and 2013. Self-Confidence Scale developed by Tokinan (2008) as well as Socio-Demographic Characteristics Scale, was applied on the athletes. as the data obtained were analyzed in SPSS 13.0 package program, self-confidence was significant by the variables of gender, exposure to violence, sports branch, the years spent working professionally and doing sports in total whereas the results were found to be insignificant by the variables of marital status, regular participation in non-sports activities, age, educational status and level of income.

**Keywords:** Sports; branch; self-confidence; professional athletes; exposure to violence.

### Introduction

Self-confidence was stated not to be a temporary situation but a judgment for feeling valued and a general personality trait. It was defined as one's belief in his courage, power and ability to take action using his own abilities as a source for his values and purposes. Also, it was stated that self-confidence is a basic need and psychological growth is impossible without a positive self-confidence (Bandura, 1997; Pervin and John, 2001; White, 2009). It was also mentioned that self-confidence was composed of two principal components such as "self-actualization" component including situations such as thinking, learning, selecting and having confidence in appropriate

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decision making ability and “self-esteem” component including the right to be happy, achievement of a goal, success, friendship, respect, love and satisfaction (Branden, 2002).

It was stated that basic sense of confidence was developed by the person’s knowing the positive feelings of other individuals about himself, without self-confidence an individual could not be sure about his ability to do work and he became anxious when he encountered a work he had not done before although he had the necessary skills (Kasatura, 1998; Yavuzer, 2002; Öztürk, 2004; Göknar, 2007).

Researchers also point out the importance of self-confidence in sportive performances and mention that it affects the performance positively especially in good feelings, behaviors, fast planning in competitions, undoubtedly giving the right decision in performance increase and in continuation of the competition (Hays, Thomas, Maynard and Badwen, 2009). Sport self-confidence in the fields of sports was reported to be important in achieving success. It was mentioned that sport self-confidence was divided into two groups as state and trait sport confidence (Cited: Bozkurt, Koruç, Arslan and Kocaekşi, 2012). Based on the knowledge that basic self-confidence and sport self-confidence were both important, it was wondered in this study what the self-confidence level other than sport self-confidence was in performing athletes having proven their talents and working professionally.

Based on the knowledge that self-confidence is important in sportive performances, it was wondered what the self-confidence level was in performing athletes having proven their talents and working professionally. Starting from these main problems, it was tried to find out the self-confidence level of the athletes working in different branches and whether or not this feeling differed according to the variables such as age, gender, marital status, education level, economic situation, exposure to violence, participation in non-sports activities, sports branch worked, the number of years spent working professionally and doing sports in total.

## **Methods**

This is a descriptive study. The study was administered on 607 athletes in total, 265 of whom were female and 342 of whom were male, working individually or in a team in 9 branches throughout Turkey including athletics (38 female, 34 male), arm wrestling (32 female, 32 male), basketball (31 female, 43 male), football (28 female, 60 male), handball (37 female, 34 male), weightlifting (30 female, 35 male), judo (33 female, 37 male), volleyball (32 female, 36 male), wrestling (4 female, 31 male). 1,200 scales were sent in total in the provinces of İstanbul, Kocaeli, Ankara, Sakarya, Aydın, Bilecik, Samsun, Kayseri, Kütahya, Hatay and Eskişehir. 651 scales in total were filled and reached the researcher from the surveys sent. When the surveys filled were examined, 607 scales in total found to be valid were taken into consideration. The data collection

process lasted two years in the years 2012 and 2013. A group of the athletes included in the scope of the study had Europe and World degrees in national team level and Olympic experience, a group played in the Premier League in Turkey, a group had degrees in Turkey and regional championships and a group had at least one-year sports experience. A part of the data were provided from Turkey Youth Weightlifting Championship organized in Kayseri in 2012, a part of the data for arm wrestling from Turkey Interuniversity Championship organized in Bilecik, a part of the data for judo branch with the voluntary participation of the athletes as a result of being informed in Samsun Grand Prix Tournament. Also, in data collection, a part of the surveys were sent and returned through e-mail and courier, a part was collected with the voluntary assistance of the athletes and some branch teachers and a part was collected through face-to-face interviews before and after the trainings.

### Data Collection Tools

The highest point to be taken from the Scale developed by Tokinan for his doctoral thesis (2008) having Likert-type 5-point format is 75. Points below 35 mean low self-confidence and points between 35 and 70 mean normal self-confidence. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability coefficient of the 19-item scale was found to be 0,81 (Tokinan, 2008; Tokinan and Bilen, 2011).

### Data Analysis

The data obtained as a result of the study were statistically analyzed in SPSS (statistical package for the social sciences) 13 package program and its significance was tested at the level of 0.05. The following processes were performed at the statistical analysis stage. Frequency and percentage distributions to describe the personal traits of the athletes recruited in the study were calculated. Mean and standard deviation values were used in determination of the scores obtained from the self-confidence scale. As it was determined that the data followed a normal distribution according to the normality test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov), independent t-test was used for comparisons of two groups and one-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) for comparison of 3 or more groups.

### Results

**Table 1 Results of self-confidence scale by socio-demographic variables**

Variables		N (%)	M±Sd	P Value
<b>Gender</b>	Female	265 (43.7)	74.53±10.94	<b>0.020</b>
	Male	342(56.3)	72.55±10.01	
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	51(8.3)	74.01±10.50	0.670
	Single	556(91.7)	73.36±10.46	
<b>Age</b>	18- 20 Yrs	303(49.9)	73.69±11.17	.445
	21-24 Yrs	173(28.5)	72.88±9.77	
	25-28 Yrs	92(15.2)	72.67±10.14	
	29 and over	39(6.4)	75.51±8.20	

<b>Education</b>	Primary school	2 (0.3)	72.50 ± 0.70	.093
	Secondary school	7(1.2)	67.71±18.0	
	High school	202(33.3)	72.25±10.62	
	University	396(65.2)	74.12±10.19	
<b>Income</b>	500-1000TRY	58(9.6)	71.13±11.20	0.81
	1001-1500TRY	144(23.7)	72.34±11.43	
	1501-2000TRY	170(28.0)	73.81±10.27	
	2001-2500TRY	123(20.3)	73.48±9.95	
	2501TRY and more	112(18.5)	75.33±9.34	
<b>Number of years spent doing sports</b>	1-3 years	55 (9.1)	71.82±13.67	<b>0.032</b>
	4-6 years	123 (20.3)	72.68±11.07	
	7-9 years	167 (27.5)	72.80±9.87	
	10-12 years	149 (24.5)	75.98±10.05	
	13-15 years	75 (12.4)	72.50±9.30	
	16 years and over	38 (6.3)	72.63±8.09	
<b>Number of years spent doing sports professionally</b>	1-3 years	235 (38.7)	72.58±11.28	<b>0.037</b>
	4-6 years	192 (31.6)	73.53±9.33	
	7-9 years	117 (19.3)	74.76±9.39	
	10-12 years	38 (6.3)	75.00±12.55	
	13-15 years	15 (2.5)	67.27±12.7	
	16 years and over	10 (1.6)	78.40±6.15	

When examining Table 1, while the mean scores of self-confidence of the athletes did not differ significantly according to marital status ( $p= 0.670$ ), age ( $p= .445$ ), education ( $p= .093$ ) and income level ( $p= 0.81$ ), a significant difference was observed to occur according to gender ( $p=0.020$ ), the number of years spent doing sports ( $p=0.032$ ) the number of years worked professionally ( $p= 0.037$ ).

**Table 2. Mean scores of self-confidence scale by the statuses of participation in non-sport activities and exposure to violence**

Variables		N (%)	M±Sd	P Value
<b>Participation in Non-sport Activity</b>	Yes	201(33.114)	74.47±11.18	0.082
	No	406(66.886)	72.90±10.06	
<b>Exposure to violence</b>	Exposed to violence	155(25.5)	69.18±10.84	<b>0.000</b>
	not exposed to violence	452(74.5)	74.87±9.93	
<b>Type of violence</b>	Physical	33(5.4)	72.24±11.07	,098
	Psychological	78(12.9)	69.06±9.96	
	Economical	0 (0.0)	0	
	Physical and psycho-logical	39(6.4)	66.36±11.62	
	All	5 (,8)	74.00±13.00	
<b>Perpetrators of violence in sports environments</b>	Coach	63(10.4)	68.31±12.16	,956
	Spectator	22 (3.6)	70.13±10.45	
	Club manager	5 (,8)	71.20±8.04	
	Teammate	3 (,5)	71.33±4.93	
	Coach and spectator	4 (,7)	65.50±9.57	
	Opposing team	2 (,3)	71.00±8.48	
	All sports environments	16 (2.6)	67.87±9.92	
	Non-sports environment	40 (6.6)	70.40±10.45	

In Table 2, while the mean scores of self-confidence scale was not found to be significant in terms of the status of participation in non-sport activities ( $p=0.082$ ), they were observed to be significant according to the status of exposure to violence ( $p=.000$ ). Self-confidence scores were not found significant according to the perpetrators of violence in sports environments ( $p=.956$ ) and the type of violence exposed ( $p=.098$ ).

**Table 3. Mean and standard deviation values of self-confidence scale by branch and gender**

Sports Branch	Female (n) M±Sd	Male (n) M±Sd	Total M±Sd	Total n (%)
Arm wrestling	(32) 74.28±10.68	(32) 70.21±11.6	72.25±11.25	64(10.5)
Athletics	(38) 80.60±7.75	(34) 77.23±10.15	79.01±9.06	72(11.9)
Football	(28) 69.64±10.23	(60) 71.21±16.95	70.71±8.11	88(14.5)
Basketball	(31) 75.93±8.87	(43) 71.88±11.10	73.58±10.36	74(12.2)
Handball	(37) 77.27±9.71	(34) 73.88±9.22	75.64±9.56	71(11.7)
Volleyball	(32) 76.56±9.73	(36) 73.36±11.31	75.86±10.64	68(11.2)
Weightlifting	(30) 73.36±8.74	(35) 72.23±11.86	72.75±10.48	65(10.7)
Judo	(33) 68.03±14.09	(37) 71.97±8.29	70.11±11.49	70(11.5)
Wrestling	(4) 63.50±20.68	(31) 72.03±9.74	71.06±11.36	35(5.8)
<b>P Value</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.173</b>	<b>.000</b>	

In Table 3, each female and male was evaluated separately in their own group; self-confidence scores of female were found highly significant according to branches ( $p=.000$ ) whereas self-confidence scores of males were not found significant in terms of branches ( $p=.173$ ).

**Table 4 Tukey test results showing the differences among the branches**

Branch	Branch	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Athletics	Arm wrestling	-6.763	1.74	<b>.004</b>
	Football	8.297	1.616	<b>.000</b>
	Basketball	5.432	1.634	<b>.036</b>
	Weightlifting	6.260	1.740	<b>.010</b>
	Judo	8.899	1.707	<b>.000</b>
	Wrestling	7.956	2.096	<b>.005</b>
Handball	Judo	5.533	1.713	<b>.035</b>

In Table 4, among which branches the sense of self-confidence of the athletes differed was shown. When examining the table, significant differences were observed among the branches of athletics and arm wrestling ( $p=.004$ ), football ( $p=.000$ ), basketball ( $p=.036$ ), weightlifting ( $p=.010$ ), judo ( $p=.000$ ) and wrestling ( $p=.005$ ); and also handball and judo ( $p=.035$ ) in terms of the sense of self-confidence.

## Discussion

One of the factors affecting self-confidence and performance was evaluated as gender (Woodman and Hardy, 2003). When examining Table 1, self-confidence mean scores of female athletes were found to be significantly higher compared to male athletes. It was seen that there are also studies finding self-confidence level of females higher than males in the literature and the reason of this was explained as a situation related to the desire of females to be like males and strong and also not to lose their roles (Kurtuldu, 2007; Eraydın, 2010; Merey, 2010). Results in favor of males in terms of physical activity, self-confidence and gender differences were also found and it was reported that gender differences contributed according to the type of duty (Lirgg, 1991).

Although it was observed in this study that the sense of self-confidence did not differ significantly among the groups in terms of marital status and education level, some studies in the literature showed that education and self-confidence went parallel with each other and self-confidence level of the students increased with the organization of training programs (Brown et al., 2003; Esterl, Henzi and Cohn, 2006; Merey, 2010). The reason why education was a variable that did not make a difference in terms of self-confidence in this study unlike the literature findings was thought to be resulted from the fact that the athletes who participated in the study were high school and university graduates and professional athletes to a large extent. It was observed that self-confidence scores did not differ significantly in terms of income level. Considering the knowledge that the reason why self-confidence scores were not found significant was that the athletes were professional, their self-confidence increased as they reached peak performance and showed success, there was a significant correlation between self-confidence and successful sports performance (Fahrenwald and Sharma, 2002; Feltz, 2007; Otacıoğlu, 2008; White, 2009) and transition from amateurism to professionalism was an indicator of success for an individual, it was thought that self-confidence increase was supported with the achievement of success as a result of experience growth and being professional.

In this study, the athletes' statuses of exposure to violence were evaluated and it was observed that self-confidence scores of the athletes exposed to violence were significantly low. Considering the fact that self-confidence scores of the athletes exposed to violence were significantly low supported the information in literature about exposure to physical violence affecting self – confidence development adversely and low self-confidence could have been resulted from a damaged sense of self as a result of violence and childhood traumas affected self-confidence, it was thought that further studies should be conducted on this subject to evaluate the self-values of athletes (Branden, 2002). It was stated that family members being in solidarity and feeling confidence affected basic trust (Cüceloğlu, 2006). Although no information about family

atmosphere has been questioned in this study, sense of trust and belonging is also important in sports environments. Tajfel (1981) mentioned the concept of social identity group membership which he considered as a part of the concept of social self and social identity. He also mentioned that people identified their self-esteem partly with the group, they believed that the group they belonged to was better than the others and protected it and when there was no sense of belonging, problems were experienced in terms of basic trust (Tajfel, 1981; Karakitapoğlu 1999). It was also thought as a result of this study that exposure to violence in sports environments could be the reason for having low self-confidence. Although no significant difference was observed in self-confidence scores in terms of perpetrators of violence and type of violence in the findings of this study, when interpreted with the information that the students who experienced negative attitudes from their teachers at school and who were exposed to pressure, teasing, scolding, intolerance, verbal or physical attack experienced self-confidence problems and violence affected self-confidence level (Humphreys, 1999; Gökner, 2007), it was concluded that perpetration of violence on the athletes by the trainers, the educators of the athletes, could be effective in the reduction of the sense of self-confidence.

Considering the number of years spent doing sports, self-confidence level was observed to be the highest in those who were engaged in sports for 10-12 years and the lowest in those with 1-3-year-experience. Evaluated with the information that the sense of self-efficacy increases as simple tasks are performed and later on self-confidence increases in the process of changing behavior and sportive achievements increase self-confidence (Fahrenwald and Sharma, 2002; Otacıoğlu, 2008; White, 2009), the fact that athletes have low self-confidence scores in the first three years when they have started sports made us think that gaining experience over the years and having some achievements in order to be able to become professional increased self-confidence. Considering the number of years worked professionally, self-confidence scores were found to be the highest in those with experience for 16 years and over. It was followed by experience for 10-12 years, 7-9 years, 4-6 years and 1-3 years and the most interesting finding was that self-confidence was in the lowest level in those with 13-15-year-professional experience. These results being significant necessitated a more detailed evaluation of the situation. It can be seen from the results that the number of years spent doing sports and worked professionally is also a determinant in the increase of the sense of self-confidence. Considering the information that attaining a challenging objective feeds self-esteem, being tested with known and easy targets reduces self-confidence, the more developed a person's self-confidence is, the more struggle against difficulties related to his occupation and life increases, as an individual is active, has a target and an action plan, takes an action and makes an effort, his self-confidence increases, people with low self-confidence are

passive (Branden, 2002; Gökner, 2007; White, 2009), there is a positive relationship between success, self-confidence and being motivated (Jacopsen, Eggen, and Kauchak, 2002), it was thought that studies evaluating the level of self-confidence, the achievements and targets of the athletes in detail would present more clear findings related to the subject.

When the self-confidence levels of all the athletes participating in the research were evaluated in terms of branches, significant results were obtained. Self-confidence scores in athletics in particular being higher than in the other branches showed the importance of the existence of the researches evaluating the psychological processes of the athletes in this branch when they have started sports and in subsequent periods in detail. When each group was evaluated in itself according to gender as well as all participants being evaluated among the branches, although no significant results were found in terms of males, self-confidence scores of females were observed to vary significantly by branch. When examining Table 3, it was thought that the lowest scores being in sports branches such as wrestling and football, in which females cannot assert themselves in terms of sportive achievement and mean scores being low in branches such as wrestling, weightlifting and football, which are considered as male branches by the society with gender roles (Baştuğ ve Kuru, 2009), also supported the information that self-confidence increases through being successful and appreciated. Especially, as it is in all the groups included in the study, self-confidence level of the athletes being high in terms of females as well suggests that a more detailed evaluation should be made.

Considering the movement performed is both an open skill where position, speed and timing are adjusted according to the other people and individual and based on the information that self-assertion is realized through achievement of success and self-decision making during the competition is effective in self-knowledge and self-awareness and self-approval are effective in the increase of self-confidence (Yakupoğlu, 1996; Humphreys, 1999; Branden, 2002; Şafak ve Arkar, 2003; White, 2009), it was thought that adoption of athletics branch in terms of females by the society might have been effective in the increase of self-confidence.

## **Conclusion**

Nowadays, the idea that psychological factors are also important as well as technical and tactical trainings for success in sports have gradually gained acceptance. Although it was stated that self-confidence is also important as well as many factors from thought to feeling especially in the accomplishment of a task, it was seen that there are very few studies evaluating the self-confidence and sportive performance relationship in sports sciences.

As a result of this study, while the level of self-confidence was significant by the variables of gender, exposure to violence, sports branch, the number of years spent professionally and doing



sports in total, the results were found to be insignificant according to marital status, regular participation in non-sports activities, age, educational status and income level.

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