The Relationship between Mental Readiness and Difficulty in Emotion Regulation on the part of Amateur Football Players

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the relationship between amateur football players' mental readiness and difficulty in dealing with the level of emotion regulation. The study group consisted of 219 volunteer male athletes who actively played amateur league football in Bingol, Turkey during the 2018-2019 season. Along with a consideration of various demographic variables, the "Mental Readiness Scale" and the "Difficulty in Emotion Regulation Scale" have been used in this study. SPSS packaged software has been utilized for data analysis purposes. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation and the One-Way ANOVA test have been utilized in the data analysis. According to the findings, a negative relationship has been determined between mental readiness and difficulty in emotion regulation on the part of the amateur football players. Furthermore, a statistically significant difference has been found between the variable of the football playing year and the total degree of mental readiness, mental preparation, cool-headedness and goals sub-dimensions ($p < .05$). Moreover, another statistically significant difference has been determined between the variable working period with the current coach and the total degree of mental readiness, mental preparation and cool-headedness sub-dimensions. As a consequence, the results suggest that as the mental readiness levels of the amateur players taking part in the study increase, the difficulty they experience in emotion regulation decreases. Additionally, it has been found out that as the football playing year and working period with the current coach increases, the athletes' mental readiness levels go up, and the level of difficulty with regard to emotion regulation decreases.

Keywords: *Amateur football player; mental readiness; difficulty in emotion regulation.*

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1. Introduction

The human being, as a bio-psychosocial creature, must be viewed as a whole in terms of its cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects. Given that it is one of the actions a person performs, sporting performance can be measured by evaluating these four basic factors together, and planning and implementing the necessary studies jointly. It has been stated that mental preparation aimed at performance underlies all these factors (Erdoğan & Kocaekşi, 2015; Bozkurt, 2014).

Athletes need to use a number of mental skills such as assuredness, focusing attention on a target, maintaining self-confidence under negative circumstances, and managing motivation so as to reflect their real potential in the arena (Arvinen-Barrow et al., 2015; Kunter, 1998). Athletes increase their mental readiness by using a number of intrinsically and extrinsically methods of motivation. Individuals who are motivated internally direct themselves to achieve success, plan to attain a desired target and try to implement the plan physically. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, involves preparing an individual for competition by means of the possibility of post-performance rewards and positive reinforcers. Therefore, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation should exist simultaneously so as to achieve absolute mental readiness (Soyer et al., 2010). The process of mental preparation is thought to be effective in terms of controlling emotions. Emotions play an important function in human life and help the individual to adapt to new situations (Denollet et al., 2008; Onat & Otrar, 2010). According to Gross (2014) while emotions can be helpful, they may also act in a negative way. What is important here is the individual's ability to find the ways to regulate his or her emotions. Emotion regulation is defined as the beginning, maintenance and management of emotional stimulation to allow the individual to achieve his/her goals, and adapt to social life (Cole et al., 2004; Rus et al., 2016).

In the process of emotion regulation, the individual engages in active efforts in a planned way to keep his/her spontaneous reactions under control, or to abolish them completely. However, there are also some arguments that claim that emotion regulation involves some automated and effortless forms, and it is not always a process of abolishing reactions (Koole, 2009). During the process of emotion regulation, difficulty in regulating emotions emerges in the event of misunderstandings and the non-admission of emotions, a lack of awareness concerning emotions, and not possessing flexible regulation strategies (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). According to Linehan (2018), difficulty in ensuring emotion regulation is a combination

of an inability to regulate emotional reactions, the existence of strong and long-held reactions, and a high fidelity to emotional stimulants.

In many studies carried out on athletes, the relationship between performance and mental readiness and skills has been presented (Eloff et al., 2011; Jooste et al., 2013; Rus & Radu, 2014; Schiphof-Godart et al., 2018; Ulyayeva et al., 2020). As the psychological factors affecting sport performance are examined, it can be seen that emotions are one of the most important factors. In this context, mental preparation and emotional control should be balanced in order to achieve psychological performance on the part of the athletes.

The relationship between mental readiness and difficulty when it comes to emotion regulation is thought to be affective in sporting performance a relationship which hasn't been examined previously. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between mental readiness and difficulty in achieving emotion regulation on the part of amateur football players.

2. Material and Methods

In this study, in order to arrive at a general universal judgment, in a universe consisting of a large number of elements based on the quantitative research design, the general model in which the screening is performed on the entire universe or on a sample to be taken from it, is used (Karasar, 2012).

The study group consists of 219 volunteer male athletes who actively played amateur league football during the 2018-2019 season in Bingöl, Turkey.

In the study, the Mental Readiness scale and the Difficulty in Emotion Regulation scale were used. The Mental Readiness scale was developed by Zekioğlu et al. (2017). This scale is comprised of 35 items, 5 sub-dimensions (mental preparation, cool-headedness, fear, motivation, interest, concentration) and is of the Quartet Likert type (1=Never...4=Always). In this model, The Zekioğlu et al. study, for the scale-wide, a Cronbach Alpha value of .88 was found, while for the sub-dimensions it was found to be .85 for Mental Preparation, .77 for Cool-headedness, .64 for Fear, .55 for Motivation, .48 for Interest and .51 for Concentration. As for the current study, for the scale-wide, the Cronbach Alpha value was found to be .87, and for the sub-dimensions it was as follows: .80 for Mental Preparation, .76 for Cool-headedness, .62 for Fear, .53 for Motivation, .45 for Interest and .54 for Concentration. The Difficulty

in Emotion Regulation scale was developed by Bjureberg et al. (2016) and adapted for Turkish use by Yigit and Yigit (2019). The scale comprises 16 items, 5 sub-dimensions (Clarity, Goals, Impulse, Strategies, Non-Admission) and it is of the Quintet Likert type (1=Never...5=Always). In the adapted scale, for the scale-wide, a Cronbach Alpha value of .92 was found, while for the sub-dimensions it was as follows: .84 for Clarity, .84 for Goals, .87 for Impulse, .87 for Strategies and .78 for Non-admission. As for the current study for the scale-wide, a Cronbach Alpha value of .87 was found, while for the sub-dimensions it was as follows: .72 for Clarity, .72 for Goals, .71 for Impulse, .73 for Strategies and .68 for Non-admission.

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) packaged software was utilized for data analysis purposes. Skewness and kurtosis values have been controlled to determine whether or not the data was distributed normally. In this regard, it has been found that the skewness and kurtosis values regarding all the statements proved to be between the range of $-1 > \dots < +1$ indicating that the data is normally distributed (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Pearson correlation and the one-way ANOVA test have been utilized in data analysis.

3. Findings

In this section the one-way ANOVA test results that determine the difference between the correlation test result about the relationship between the athletes' mental readiness and the difficulty in emotion regulation, the athletes' football playing year in the current team, the variability in terms of the length of time working with the current coach, and the sub-dimensions of mental readiness and difficulty in emotion regulation are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Table 1: Correlation Analysis Results Regarding the Sub-dimensions of Mental Readiness and Difficulty in Emotion Regulation
 (Source: Authors own contribution)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	r	1											
	p												
2	r	.888**	1										
	p	.000											
3	r	.833**	.657**	1									
	p	.000	.000										
4	r	.549**	.282**	.311**	1								
	p	.000	.000	.000									
5	r	.510**	.333**	.362**	.244**	1							
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000								

6	r	.745**	.595**	.499**	.578**	.290**	1						
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000							
7	r	.559**	.361**	.520**	.204**	.329**	.291**	1					
	p	.000	.000	.000	.002	.000	.000						
8	r	-.692**	-.619**	.628**	-.368**	-.299**	-.468**	-.377**	1				
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000					
9	r	-.478**	-.428**	.406**	-.265**	-.246**	-.315**	-.276**	.602**	1			
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000				
10	r	-.558**	-.462**	.553**	-.312**	-.259**	-.411**	-.268**	.811**	.464**	1		
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000			
11	r	-.493**	-.463**	.420**	-.280**	-.191**	-.339**	-.227**	.763**	.336**	.574**	1	
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.005	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000		
12	r	-.639**	-.601**	.559**	-.287**	-.245**	-.432**	-.391**	.884**	.434**	.591**	.568**	1
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
13	r	-.483**	-.398**	.474**	-.305**	-.234**	-.291**	-.258**	.769**	.331**	.538**	.465**	.621**
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

n=219; **p< .01

1= Mental Readiness Total Point; 2= Mental Preparation; 3= Cool-headedness; 4= Fear;
5= Motivation; 6= Inretest; 7= Concentration; 8= Difficulty in Emotion Regulation Total Point
9= Clarity; 10= Goals; 11= Impulse; 12= Strategies; 13= Non-acceptance

When Table 1 is analyzed, it can be confirmed that there is a negative relationship between all the sub-dimensions of mental readiness and difficulty in emotion regulation ($p < .01$).

Table 2. ANOVA Results Regarding the Sub-dimensions of Mental Readiness and Difficulty in Emotion Regulation According to the Variable of the Football Playing Year (Source: Authors own contribution)

Variables		Football Playing Year	n	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	F	p	Post Hoc.
Mental Readiness Total Point		a	60	108.75	14.01	5.285	.006*	b-c
		b	99	104.58	15.65			
		c	60	112.38	14.43			
Mental Preparation		a	60	45.67	7.01	7.579	.001*	b-a,c
		b	99	42.52	7.38			
		c	60	46.77	6.98			
Cool-headedness		a	60	22.12	3.80	6.713	.001*	c-a,b
		b	99	21.59	4.29			
		c	60	24.03	4.22			
Fear		a	60	13.53	2.27	.189	.828	-
		b	99	13.82	3.38			
		c	60	13.63	2.79			
Motivation		a	60	8.67	1.84	1.215	.299	-
		b	99	8.23	1.84			
		c	60	8.44	1.78			
Interest		a	60	9.35	1.85	1.795	.169	-
		b	99	8.94	2.19			

The Relationship between Mental Readiness and Difficulty in Emotion ...
Ilımdar YALCIN et al.

	c	60	9.53	1.89			
Concentration	a	60	9.41	1.64			
	b	99	9.48	1.83	1.111	.331	-
	c	60	9.86	1.96			
Difficulty in Emotion Regulation Total Point	a	60	32.77	12.72			
	b	99	33.79	11.15	1.855	.159	-
	c	60	30.35	8.42			
Clarity	a	60	4.05	1.78			
	b	99	4.16	1.81	.910	.404	-
	c	60	3.77	1.80			
Goals	a	60	6.13	2.76			
	b	99	6.73	2.74	5.223	.006*	b-c
	c	60	5.35	2.18			
Impulse	a	60	5.95	2.77			
	b	99	6.33	2.65	.394	.675	-
	c	60	6.17	2.50			
Strategies	a	60	10.40	5.06			
	b	99	10.48	4.31	2.419	.091	-
	c	60	9.03	3.19			
Non-acceptance	a	60	6.23	2.73			
	b	99	6.08	2.62	.104	.901	-
	c	60	6.03	2.19			
n=219; *p< .05							
a= 1-4 years; b=5-8 years; c=9 years and more							

When Table 2 was analyzed, a statistically significant difference was determined to exist between the variable of the athletes' football playing year and the sub-dimensions of mental readiness general score, mental preparation, cool-headedness and goals.

Table 3. ANOVA Results Regarding the Sub-dimensions of Mental Readiness and Difficulty in Emotion Regulation According to the Variable of Working Time with the Current Coach
(Source: Authors own contribution)

Variables	Working Period with the Current Coach	n	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	F	p	Post Hoc.
Mental Readiness Total Point	a	88	105.73	15.22	4.028	.008*	d-a,b
	b	70	106.06	14.70			
	c	28	110.11	15.57			
	d	33	115.45	13.64			
Mental Preparation	a	88	43.19	7.44	5.078	.002*	d-a,b
	b	70	44.11	7.10			
	c	28	44.79	6.93			
	d	33	48.85	6.87			
Cool-headedness	a	88	21.94	4.54	6.485	.000*	d-a,b
	b	70	21.40	3.84			
	c	28	23.36	3.84			

	d	33	24.94	3.53			
Fear	a	88	13.64	3.01	.341	.796	-
	b	70	13.71	2.76			
	c	28	14.14	3.36			
	d	33	13.39	2.84			
Motivation	a	88	8.28	1.52	.855	.465	-
	b	70	8.41	1.88			
	c	28	8.46	2.43			
	d	33	8.88	1.88			
Interest	a	88	9.07	1.93	1.057	.368	-
	b	70	9.06	2.20			
	c	28	9.64	2.02			
	d	33	9.58	1.92			
Concentration	a	88	6.60	1.97	.584	.626	-
	b	70	9.35	1.54			
	c	28	9.71	2.10			
	d	33	9.81	1.75			
Difficulty in Emotion Regulation Total Point	a	88	33.61	11.82	.976	.405	-
	b	70	32.93	10.66			
	c	28	31.29	10.49			
	d	33	30.09	9.73			
Clarity	a	88	4.03	1.80	.652	.583	-
	b	70	4.14	1.79			
	c	28	4.14	1.99			
	d	33	3.64	1.67			
Goals	a	88	6.33	2.76	1.418	.238	-
	b	70	6.51	2.45			
	c	28	5.64	2.70			
	d	33	5.58	2.72			
Impulse	a	88	6.34	2.48	.735	.532	-
	b	70	6.30	2.87			
	c	28	5.54	2.59			
	d	33	6.06	2.60			
Strategies	a	88	10.51	4.70	.809	.490	-
	b	70	9.91	3.89			
	c	28	10.07	4.56			
	d	33	9.18	3.73			
Non-acceptance	a	88	6.40	2.74	.840	.474	-
	b	70	6.06	2.63			
	c	28	5.89	2.51			
	d	33	5.64	1.60			
n=219; *p< .05							
a= 1 year; b= 2 years; c= 3 years; d= 3 years and more							

When Table 3 was analyzed, a statistically significant difference was found between the variable of the athletes' working time with the current coach and the sub-dimensions of mental readiness general score, mental preparation and cool-headedness.

4. Discussion

A negative relationship has been determined to exist between the sub-dimensions of mental readiness (mental preparation, cool-headedness, fear, motivation, interest, concentration) and the sub-dimensions of difficulty in emotion regulation (clarity, goals, impulse, strategies, non-admission) of the amateur football players who participated in the study. It has been found that as the mental readiness levels of the athletes increase positively, the difficulty in emotion regulation proceed negatively. In other words, as the athletes become more cool-headed, more fearless, more interested, more successful in concentration and more motivated when they are prepared mentally, their strategies, goals, impulses and their assimilation of work increases. In a study undertaken by the Olympic sport psychology counsellors to identify the best counselling experience, Partington and Orlick (1991) emphasized that a wide range of mental readiness and planning helps athletes to regulate emotion, and to face and perceived difficulties, and improve their emotions. In a study carried out by Robaza et al. (2004) to investigate emotion regulation and athletic performance using the Individual Zones of Optimal Functioning (IZOF) model, the athletes reported that they used the strategies of soliloquy, mental impersonation and emotion regulation to enhance their performance.

A statistically significant difference has been noted between the variable of the athletes' football playing year and the sub-dimensions of mental readiness general score, mental preparation, cool-headedness and goals ($p < .05$). This difference is thought to result from the effect of experience on the mental preparation of the athletes. Moreover, it has been found that those athletes who have more football playing experience have higher levels of mental preparation, cool-headedness and fearlessness, and lower levels of difficulty in regulating emotion. In a different study carried out by Nicolas et al. (2009) on mental durability, it has been determined that experience in sport brings higher average scores with regard to mental strength, coping with difficulties, and emotional commitment.

As for the variable of time spent working with the current coach, a statistically significant difference has been determined in the sub-dimensions of the total score for mental readiness, mental preparation and cool-headedness ($p < .05$). This difference is thought to result from the fact that the athletes who had worked with the current coach for a long time felt themselves more mentally ready, and more controlled, when they faced a particular situation on the football pitch. Furthermore, it has also been found that the athletes who had worked with the current coach for a long

time had high levels of mental readiness as well as increased motivation, interest, goals and the ability to form strategies. When the literature is examined, in his study to observe the relationship between professional footballers' mental impersonation and self-confidence, Yalçın (2018) has indicated that as the working time with the current coach increases, the levels of the athletes' mental impersonation and self-confidence also increase.

5. Conclusions

Consequently, it has been determined that as the mental readiness levels of the amateur footballers who participated in this study increased, the difficulty when it comes to regulating emotion decreases. Furthermore, as the football playing year and the working time with the current coach increase, it has been found that the athletes' mental readiness levels increase, and the difficulty in regulating emotion decreases. In accordance with these results, it is suggested that, in order to increase the psychological performance of the athletes, there is a need to implement mental readiness processes in a planned way.

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