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# Does self-confidence link to motivation? A study in field hockey athletes

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## ABSTRACT

Sari, İ., Ekici, S., Soyer, F., & Eskiler, E. (2015). Does Self-confidence Link to Motivation? A Study in Field Hockey Athletes. *J. Hum. Sport Exerc.*, 10(1), pp.24-35. Previous research indicated some evidence of a positive relationship between motivation and self-efficacy beliefs/perceived competence/self-perceptions. Therefore, the relationship between self-confidence and motivation was investigated in sport context in this study. Participants of this study were 111 field hockey athletes. Sport Motivation Scale (Pelletier et al., 1995) and Self-confidence Scales (Tokinan, 2008) were used for data collection. SPSS.17 package program was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics techniques, t-test and Pearson's correlation analysis were used. According to the results, self-confidence was found to be positively and significantly correlating with intrinsic motivation to know and to accomplish things, intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation, external regulation, identification, introjection, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation ( $p<0,05$ ). Self-confidence appeared to be negatively and significantly correlating with amotivation ( $p<0,05$ ). In the light of the result it could be suggested that when athletes perceive high self- confidence and efficient self-perception and trust their abilities, their motivation to practice their sports enhances. Results were discussed in line with the relevant literature and some applications were proposed. **Key words:** SELF-CONFIDENCE, MOTIVATION, ATHLETES, FIELD HOCKEY.

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## INTRODUCTION

Self-confidence and motivation are the factors that could enhance sportive performance and therefore they have been widely researched by the researchers researching psychological aspects of sportive performance (Monazami et al., 2012; Farzalipour et al., 2012; Kouli et al., 2010; Hays et al., 2009; Vealey, 2009; Vealey et al., 1998). In today's sports, every way to increase athletic performance is tried. Technologic developments, the latest sports products to enhance performance, nutritional supplements, up to date training programs, up to date match analysis and statistical methods are followed for the purpose of obtaining highest performance. Sport psychology or psychological aspects of sportive performance is also one of those areas that are widely researched and the results of academic results in this area are tried to be applied in sport teams by sports coaches. In elite sports, also, support from sport psychologists is received. The purpose of all these applications is the same; obtaining highest performance and trying to contribute athletes' athletic performance via every way possible. Self- confidence and sport motivation are one of those psychological components that are dealt with.

**Self-confidence.** Self-confidence is an individual's belief that he or she can be successful. Self-confidence is proposed to be context-specific to specific tasks and some people could display this feature through a wide range of activities. Self-confidence is also similar to self-efficacy suggested by self-efficacy theory. As defined by self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986), four factors enhance self-efficacy. These factors are successful performances (competence), vicarious experience, verbal persuasion (including praise and encouragement), and arousal. Self-confidence is simply defined to be a self-perceived measure of one's belief in one's own abilities which is dependent upon contextual background and setting (Perry, 2011).

In order to deal with self-confidence, it is important to clearly state what actually it is according to different definitions. Self-confidence is the feeling of worthy that one feels for himself/herself (Bandura, 1997). Self-confidence is a general feature of personality; it is not a temporary attitude (Pervin & John, 2001). Similarly, Feltz (1988) defined self-confidence as "rather than a general feature, it is a belief of a person that they can successfully achieve an activity and individuals' trust to their own judgment, ability, strength and decisions.

As it is seen from the definitions, self-confidence is one of the factors that could affect many factors in individuals' daily experiences. It is stated that self-confidence level of a person could positively or negatively affect many components in one's life (Tokinan & Bilen, 2011). For example, researchers, previously, stated that self-confidence could positively affect performance (Chamberlain & Hale, 2007; Tavani & Losh, 2003; Edwards & Hardy, 1996, Martin & Gill, 1991). Furthermore, Weinberg and Gould (2003) stated that, when self-confidence level of an athlete is high, he/she can focus on what they are doing.

Furthermore, athletes with low self-confidence could worry about their coming performance or they can think about other people's opinion about their performance. However, athletes with high self-confidence do not worry about the same thinks as athletes with lower self-confidence. Self-confidence has been widely research in the last decades and self- confidence, for instance was proposed to affect students' academic performance. In contrast, it should also be noted that high self-confidence can sometimes result in complacency or the underestimation of a weak opponent which could result in inadequate alertness, lack of focus, and/or carelessness (Kouli et al., 2010). Therefore it could be suggested that there is an optimal level for self-confidence that athletes should have.

Self-confidence was also conceptualized as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; 1977) and perceived efficacy (Nicholls, 1984; Harter, 1982). It was also suggested that the terms of self-confidence was often substituted for self-efficacy in the relevant literature. Some researchers suggested that self-confidence and self-efficacy are different but they are conceptually close to each other (Bandura, 1997; Shrauger & Schohn, 1995; Grundy, 1993). It was proposed that self-confidence could be general or situation specific whereas self-efficacy is situation specific. The theory of self-efficacy was often used a theoretical basis for many self-confidence researches in different areas (Akin, 2007).

**Motivation.** Studies on motivation examine the processes that energize and direct behaviours (Reeve, 2001). Motivation is a motivative (moving) power that stimulates, directs people to do their desirable behaviours. Motivation is also the power that makes people to sustain the intended behaviour. Motivation increases a person's performance and his/her commitment to their organizations. In contrast, lack of motivation negatively affects productivity (Ersarı & Naktiyok, 2012).

Motivation could affect learning and performance by four ways

- Increases individuals' energy and working level.
- Directs individuals to certain aims.
- Directs individuals to initiation of an activity and makes them to sustain it.
- Affects learning strategy and cognitive processes of individuals (Ormrod, 1999 as cited in Tokinan & Bilen, 2011).

Motivation is an internal condition that initiates, manages and sustains an action. It can also be thought as an inner energy or mental power that helps people to reach their aims (Sternberg and Williams, 2002 as cited in Tokinan and Bilen, 2011).

It was proposed that there are two basic types of motivations which are intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Extrinsic motivation is affecting behaviour through influences which are independent from personality, for instance, verbal praise, rewarding with an object, acknowledgement; verbal scolding, punishment, forbidding participation do not thus satisfy human needs, rather they are important for the adjustment to the expectations of the environment. However, intrinsic motivation helps to satisfy human needs, irrespective of the expectations of the environment; the purpose of intrinsically motivated behaviour is not an external factor. In intrinsically motivated activities, the behaviour originates from the self (Bollók et al., 2011). Intrinsic motivation occurs if an individual engages voluntarily in an activity for its own sake, however, extrinsic motivation appears if an individual is motivated by external factors which are for example; rewards and social recognition (Gill, 2000).

Two types of motivation uncover the question that whether these two motivation types are equally important. Hollembeak & Amorose (2005) suggested that it is better to behave in a certain way for intrinsic reasons. Namely, being intrinsically motivated appears to be more beneficial than being extrinsically motivated. This is due to the fact that when intrinsically motivated, the reason of the activity is internal. For example people can be intrinsically motivated when they feel enjoyment, excitement and feeling of satisfaction and therefore, they behave in a certain way. For these reasons, behaving due to intrinsic reasons is suggested to be more useful rather than being motivated by extrinsic reasons. Similarly, Vallerand & Losier (1999) stated that if the athlete is more intrinsically motivated, he/she is more likely to participate in a certain activity or works hard even in the absence of extrinsic rewards and reinforcement. Intrinsically motivated athletes are expected to persist at certain activities, select challenging tasks, give effort, show interest, experience enjoyment in the activity (Ntoumanis, 2001; Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000;

Pelletier et al., 1995; Deci et al., 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Moreover, intrinsically motivated individuals are also reported to adhere participation better than those who are more extrinsically motivated (Ryan et al., 1997). Furthermore, it was also proposed that sport education condition was more successful in maintaining high levels of intrinsic motivation (Spittle & Byrne, 2009). Lastly, there is another term which should be defined in motivation concept; it is the term of amotivation. It is the state of being not motivated by any reasons. If amotivation level of an athlete is too high, it means that he/she cannot find any intrinsic or extrinsic reason to practice his/her sports. This could possibly lead to an athlete to dropout from participation to the sport.

There are many studies which contribute the above mentioned researches proposing that being intrinsically motivated is preferable compared to being extrinsically motivated. For instance, Frederick and Ryan (1993) reported that athletes with a higher level of self-determination and intrinsic motivation could have more positive mental characteristics such as lower depression, higher self-esteem, lower anxiety and depression and greater vitality. It was also suggested by previous studies that intrinsically motivated athletes are more likely to enjoy participating in sport and less likely to drop out (White et al., 1998). Vallerand & Losier (1999) suggested, more extrinsically motivated athletes could result in dropping out of the sport that they practice (as cited in Gábor et al., 2009).

The aim of this study is to find the relationship between sport motivation and self-confidence of athletes. It was expected that self-confidence of athletes would be correlating with motivation of them. Relevant literatures in different areas other than sports have reported the relationship between motivation and self-confidence/self-perceptions/self-efficacy. Hackett (1985), Hackett and Betz (1989) reported some support that self-efficacy beliefs could influence career choices of people. Moreover, Pajares (2003) stated that students who expect success in a school subject tend to value that subject. This is due to the fact that students' perceptions of what they can accomplish influence their expectations about the outcome. When their self-confidence is high, they trust their capacities and perceive that they can be successful. Therefore, students' perceptions of what they can accomplish affect their school subject choices. When they trust their abilities, they choose a subject and they expect a good outcome (Pajares, 2003).

Previous researches reported the relationship between motivation and self-confidence/self-perceptions/self-efficacy. As a contribution to the relevant literature, it was aimed in this study to find the relationship between motivation and self-confidence in sports context. It was expected that self-confidence of athletes would be correlating with motivation of them.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

Participants of this study were 111 field hockey athletes (68 males and 43 females) who participated to under 16 age national championship competition. Athletes mean age was  $14,27 \pm 1,25$  and the length of their previous field hockey experience was  $2,41 \pm 1,44$  years. 1 participant declared to be an international athlete and 110 athletes were competing at only the national level. 35 participants were studying at primary school and 76 of them were at secondary school level.

### *Measures*

The questionnaire that was applied to the participants consisted of 5 questions evaluating demographic characteristics, 19 items for self-confidence and 28 items for sport motivation.

Sport motivation was measured by Sport Motivation Scale (SMS) (Pelletier et al., 1995). Language adaptation of the Sport Motivation Scale was made by Kazak (2004). The scale has 28 questions which were answered on a 7-point Likert scale and 6 sub-dimensions; Intrinsic motivation to know and to accomplish things (8 items), intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation (4 items), external regulation (4 items), identification (4 items), introjection (4 items), amotivation (4 items). The items of intrinsic motivation to know and to accomplish things and intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation subscales constitute the score for intrinsic motivation. The items for external regulation, identification and introjection subscales constitute the score of extrinsic motivation. A score for a motivation type was obtained by dividing the total score by the number of items of the subscale.

Self-confidence was assessed by a 19-items scale that was developed by Tokinan (2008). The answers of the questions were given on a 5 point Likert scale. Scores that can be obtained from this scale range between 19 and 95. Higher scores obtained from the scale represent higher self-confidence. Validity and reliability of this scale were reported by Tokinan (2008).

### *Procedure*

The participants were contacted during the competition while they are not busy with training, matches or anything else. Firstly, permissions from the athletes' coaches were obtained. When the researchers contacted with the athletes, aim of the research was explained and they are asked to participate in the research by filling the questionnaire. The athletes were also informed that participation was voluntary and the data that would be obtained from them would stay anonymous.

### *Statistical Analysis*

SPSS.17 package program was used to analyse the data. Firstly, the data was checked for incorrect data entry. When it was certain that there was not any data that had been mistyped, the analysis was made. Descriptive statistics techniques, t-test and Pearson's correlation analysis were used. Level of significance was determined to be 0.05.

## **RESULTS**

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha values of the variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-confidence	111	47	91	67,5225	9,94151	0,70
Intrinsic motivation to know and to accomplish things	111	2,75	7	5,1363	1,1365	0,76
Intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation	111	2,25	7	5,1284	1,19033	0,58
External regulation	111	1,75	7	4,7252	1,1251	0,50
Identification	111	1,75	7	4,8784	1,26799	0,66
Introjection	111	2	7	5,1937	1,26567	0,68
Amotivation	111	1	6,75	4,0563	1,36751	0,47
Intrinsic Motivation	111	2,83	7	5,1336	1,088	0,83
Extrinsic Motivation	111	2,92	7	4,9324	0,99071	0,80

Table 2. The difference between genders according to the variables

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p
Self-confidence	Male	68	67,46	10,25	0,93
	Female	43	67,63	9,55	
Intrinsic motivation to know and to accomplish things	Male	68	5,34	1,11	0,02*
	Female	43	4,81	1,12	
Intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation	Male	68	5,17	1,12	0,65
	Female	43	5,06	1,31	
External regulation	Male	68	4,65	1,15	0,41
	Female	43	4,84	1,09	
Identification	Male	68	4,84	1,22	0,71
	Female	43	4,94	1,36	
Introjection	Male	68	5,24	1,21	0,61
	Female	43	5,12	1,36	
Amotivation	Male	68	4,29	1,34	0,02*
	Female	43	3,69	1,35	
Intrinsic Motivation	Male	68	5,28	1,06	0,07
	Female	43	4,90	1,10	
Extrinsic Motivation	Male	68	4,91	0,96	0,80
	Female	43	4,96	1,05	

\*p&lt;0,05

Independent samples t-test analysis showed that there was a significant difference for intrinsic motivation to know and to accomplish things and amotivation between males and females  $p<0,05$ ).

Table 3. The difference between educational levels according to the variables

	Education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p
Self-confidence	Primary School	35	67,26	8,52	0,85
	High school	76	67,64	10,58	
Intrinsic motivation to know and to accomplish things	Primary School	35	4,93	0,89	0,14
	High school	76	5,23	1,23	
Intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation	Primary School	35	5,04	1,01	0,58
	High school	76	5,17	1,27	
External regulation	Primary School	35	4,84	0,96	0,49
	High school	76	4,67	1,20	
Identification	Primary School	35	4,66	1,10	0,20
	High school	76	4,98	1,33	
Introjection	Primary School	35	4,96	0,90	0,12
	High school	76	5,30	1,39	

Amotivation	Primary School	35	4,20	1,19	0,46
	High school	76	3,99	1,45	
Intrinsic Motivation	Primary School	35	4,96	0,83	0,20
	High school	76	5,21	1,18	
Extrinsic Motivation	Primary School	35	4,82	0,76	0,36
	High school	76	4,98	1,08	

Independent samples t-test analysis showed that there was not a significant difference for the variables between educational levels ( $p>0,05$ ).

Table 4. Correlation analysis among the variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1) Age	r p	1										
2) Sport experience	r p	,341* ,000	1									
3) Self-confidence	r p	,078 ,417	,253* ,007	1								
4) Intrinsic motivation to know and to accomplish things	r p	,070 ,466	,168 ,078	,526* ,000	1							
5) Intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation	r p	-,045 ,640	,115 ,231	,444* ,000	,752* ,000	1						
6) External regulation	r p	-,034 ,723	,150 ,116	,258* ,006	,373* ,000	,335* ,000	1					
7) Identification	r p	,014 ,886	,126 ,187	,346* ,000	,657* ,000	,632* ,000	,579* ,000	1				
8) Introjection	r p	,061 ,522	,171 ,072	,506* ,000	,639* ,000	,545* ,000	,356* ,000	,527* ,000	1			
9) Amotivation	r p	-,142 ,137	-,052 ,589	-,377* ,000	-,165 ,083	-,226* ,017	,122 ,203	-,096 ,315	-,244* ,010	1		
10) Intrinsic motivation	r p	,032 ,737	,159 ,096	,528* ,000	,971* ,000	,888* ,000	,382* ,000	,688* ,000	,644* ,000	-,198* ,037	1	
11) Extrinsic motivation	r p	,019 ,842	,183 ,054	,461* ,000	,694* ,000	,628* ,000	,777* ,000	,870* ,000	,785* ,000	-,099 ,301	,712* ,000	1

\* $p<0,05$

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed that age was positively and significantly correlating with sports experience. Sport experience was found to be positively correlating with self-confidence. Self-confidence was found to be positively and significantly correlating with intrinsic motivation to know and to accomplish



things, intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation, external regulation, identification, introjection, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Self-confidence appeared to be negatively and significantly correlating with amotivation.

## DISCUSSION

It was aimed in this study to find the relationship between motivation and self-confidence in sports context. Previous research (Pajares, 2003; Benabou & Tirole, 2002; Reeve & Deci, 1996; Hackett, 1985; Hackett & Betz, 1989; Vallerand & Reid, 1984; Bandura & Schunk, 1981) indicated some evidence of a positive relationship between motivation and self-efficacy beliefs/perceived competence/self-perceptions. Therefore, the relationship between self-confidence and motivation was investigated in sport context in this study.

Firstly, analysis to find the gender differences regarding motivation and self-confidence showed that there was a significant difference for intrinsic motivation to know and to accomplish things and amotivation between males and females. Males showed higher scores on intrinsic motivation to know and to accomplish things and lower scores on amotivation. This implies that males appeared to be intrinsically motivated for the purposes of learning new things, trying to satisfy their sense of curiosity about their sports. However, males also scored higher in amotivation and this shows that compared to females, male athletes are not intrinsically or extrinsically motivated for doing their sports. When comparing with females, they are found to not to know why actually they practice their sports. These results are surprising and contradictory.

Secondly, analysis to find the differences for the variables according to study degree revealed that there was not any significant difference between athletes studying at high school and at primary school. This simply shows that level of education does not result in significantly different scores on motivation and self-confidence.

The last analysis (table 4) provides us the relationship between sport confidence and motivation. It was observed that length of sports year that the sport was practiced (Sport experience) was positively and significantly correlated with self-confidence. This is an expected result due to the fact that the more a certain sport is practiced, the higher athletes feel confident. Every practice and experience that was obtained in the sport could result in understanding their own capacities, realizing their abilities and being confident about their own skills. This in turn could enhance athletes' self-confidence.

Moreover, correlational analysis also showed that all sub-dimensions of sport motivation excluding amotivation (intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and their sub-dimensions) were positively and significantly correlated with self-confidence. This could indicate that when athletes feel high self-confidence and efficient self-perception and trust their abilities, their motivation to practice their sports enhances. This could be due to the fact that higher confidence to their abilities could affect their perceptions of sportive outcomes. Probably when athletes are highly self-confident, they affect higher performance and therefore, their motivation to practice their sports gets higher. As a result of their higher self-confidence, they become highly intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. Supporting the result and the discussions made so far in the light of the result from this study, amotivation and self-confidence were found to be negatively and significantly correlating. This could be interpreted as that lower level of self-confidence could result in higher amotivation. When athletes' belief about their capacities and abilities is insufficient, their motivation to practice their sports gets lower which result in higher amotivation of them. According to the results, lower self-confidence could lead to higher amotivation and in this case athletes are not able to perceive the

relationship between practicing their sports and its consequences. They simply may not be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated which could be proposed as a main factor for drop outs from the sports.

Our results were consistent with the relevant literature. It was proposed by a previous research that confidence in one's abilities generally enhances motivation, making it a valuable asset for individuals with imperfect willpower (Benabou & Tirole, 2002). Moreover, Bandura & Schunk (1981) reported in their study that children who feel highly efficacious were found to have notable level of intrinsic interest. In contrast children in other conditions of their research were unsure of their capacities and showed little spontaneous interest in solving arithmetic problems. They concluded that self-perceptions of moderate to high strength were positively related to interest (Bandura & Schunk, 1981).

In another study conducted by Reeve et al. (1996), it was found that the effect of competitive outcome on intrinsic motivation was mediated by perceived competence. Furthermore, Vallerand & Reid (1984) found that positive performance feedback enhanced intrinsic motivation with the mediation role of perceived competence. This mediation role of competence indicates the positive relationship between competence and intrinsic motivation. Competence is the belief that one's hold for his/her abilities and it is, as is seen, similar to self-confidence or an important component of self-confidence. Therefore, by interpreting this result, a relationship between self-confidence and motivation could be discussed.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of current study provided some support of the relationship between sport motivation and self-confidence. Self- confidence was found to be positively and significantly correlating with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In addition, amotivation was appeared to be negatively and significantly correlating with self-confidence. It was proposed by the light of the results of this research that self-confidence and athletes' sufficient beliefs about their abilities and their strong self-perceptions could be related to their higher intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to practice their sport. Furthermore, lower self-confidence is related to higher amotivation level of athletes. Lower self-confidence could make athletes incapable of finding a reason to practice their sport. Their disbelief to their abilities could be the reason why they are not motivated to do their sport.

As a result of evaluating all the findings from the current research, it could be interpreted that behaviours and precautions to increase athletes' self-confidence could lead athletes to be highly motivated. For example, sport coaches should be careful when they are communicating with the athletes (Sarı, 2010) and when they are giving feedbacks to the athletes. Feedbacks that could diminish athletes' self-confidence might result in lower motivation of them. Therefore, rather than negative feedback, informative feedbacks should be given. Moreover, athletes should be made to understand their abilities in order to increase their self-confidence level. Sports coaches should always behave in a way that enhances athletes' self-confidence. Activities in their trainings could be chosen in a way that increases self-confidence of athletes. Similarly, goal setting process should be well-designed. Attainable goals should be set in order to make the athletes achieve their goals and strengthen their belief to their abilities. All of these suggestions could help sport coaches to boost athletes' self-confidence which in turn result in higher motivation of the athletes. This could also lead to more enjoyment and satisfaction that athletes feel when they practice their sports, more effort that athletes place on their activities and less drop outs from sports.

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