



## Journal of Education and Recreation Patterns (JERP)

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### Examination of the Stress Factors Experienced by Coaches

Ergün ÇAKIR<sup>1</sup>, Mesut GÜLEŞCE<sup>2</sup>, Kemal SARGIN<sup>3</sup>,  
Fatih ERİŞ<sup>4</sup>

#### To cite this article:

Çakır, E., Güleşce, M., Sargin, K. & Eriş, F. (2023). Examination of the Stress Factors Experienced by Coaches. *Journal of Education and Recreation Patterns (JERP)*, 4 (1), 181-191. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53016/jerp.v4i1.112>

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<sup>1</sup>Ergün Çakır, Assistant Professor, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, [ecakir@yyu.edu.tr](mailto:ecakir@yyu.edu.tr) ,  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5895-5297>

<sup>2</sup>Mesut Güleşce, Phd Students. Gazi University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Sport Management, [mesutgulesce@gmail.com](mailto:mesutgulesce@gmail.com) <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6676-6947>

<sup>3</sup> Kemal Sargin , Asst.Prof.Dr, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, [kemalsargin@yyu.edu.tr](mailto:kemalsargin@yyu.edu.tr)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5415-9162>

<sup>4</sup> Fatih Eriş, Asst. Prof. Dr, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Faculty of Sport Sciences, [fatihervis@yyu.edu.tr](mailto:fatihervis@yyu.edu.tr),  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2301-6801>

**Examination of the Stress Factors Experienced by Coaches****Ergün ÇAKIR<sup>1</sup>, Mesut GÜLEŞCE<sup>2</sup>, Kemal SARGIN<sup>3</sup>, Fatih ERİŞ<sup>4</sup>****ARTICLE INFORMATION**

Original Research Paper

Received 20.03. 2023

Accepted 24.06. 2023

<https://jerpatterns.com>

June, 2023

**Volume:** 4, No: 1**Pages:** 181-191**ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to determine the factors that increase the dominance of sports coaches on coaches in recent years and show that it is a stressful job. Interview technique was used in the research carried out within the scope of qualitative research. A total of 83 football coaches aged between  $32.24 \pm 4.14$  ( $k=4, e=79$ ) participated voluntarily in the study, in which the criterion sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used. The data collected with the semi-structured interview form were analyzed using the content analysis method. In line with the opinions of the coaches about the stress situations collected from the research findings, the opinions and suggestions of the coaches about the stress on the concept of performance pressure, interpersonal stress, intra-organizational stress and finally uncertainty are given. As a result, coaches stated that stress is a psychological condition for them, and it is a situation that is likely to be encountered at any time.

**Keywords:** Sport, Stress, Trainer

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of stress comes from the Latin "estricia" and although it was used in the meanings of trouble, misfortune, and trouble in the 17th century, it appears as a concept that has undergone a change in meaning in the 18th and 19th centuries for power, pressure, the person, the body organs and the spiritual structure of the person. The first articles on the subject of stress (Selye, 1956) defined it as the body's response to any non-specific demand imposed on the body. Johnstone, 1989: 4 is defined as the effort that an individual spends beyond his physical and psychological limits due to the incompatible conditions in the physical and social environment (Cüceloğlu, 1994). Stress, which is expressed as the disease of modern society, is actually a part of daily life. Most people today have an intense stress load without realizing it. Mental changes in our life, good or bad, are stressful situations. As in any profession, stress can be experienced depending on the natural flow of life. Antrenörlerde oluşan stresin anksiyete, depresyon, yaşam memnuniyeti, depresyon ve yalnızlık gibi deneyimlere sebep olduğu görülebilir (Yalçın, 2022).

Coaching is considered a stressful profession (Gould et al., 2002). The research identified 182 different stressors among elite trainers (Thelwell et al., 2008), one study revealed a wide variety of stressors related to conflict, pressure, isolation, athlete anxieties, competition environment, and competition preparation (Olusoga et al., 2009). Coaching stress can even cause coaches to leave the profession (Frey, 2007). A study revealed that 261 college tennis coaches have moderate to high burnout (Kelley et al., 1999).

The idea that sports coaches are exposed to a wide variety of stressors that can be detrimental to performance and psychological state may warrant further research. This study details the potential antecedents of coaching stress. For example, Thelwell et al, (2008) revealed that coaching stress arises from performance aspects (divided by coaches' own performance and their athletes' performance) and organizational (environmental, leadership, personal, and team) factors. Some studies show that stress can consume the psychological resources of the coaches, limit the ability of the athletes to adapt to their feelings and thoughts, and damage the coach-athlete relationship (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Moreover, research shows that coaches who are highly stressed by competition rate themselves as significantly less friendly than their low-stress counterparts (Kellmann & Kallus, 1994). Similarly, coaches who report high levels of stress experience more burnout and need to distance themselves from others (Kelley et al., 1999). A coach in Frey's (2007) research revealed that when he is stressed, his unapproachable demeanor can cause his athletes to avoid him and avoid discussing any topic. Therefore, the stress of the coaches can affect the athletes and cause damage to the satisfaction and performance level of the coaches (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). Past research has considered it to be a one-way construct in which high stress is harmful and low stress is beneficial. However, stress can be perceived positively and used constructively by coaches. Frey (2007) found that coaches can actually respond positively to stress through improved focus and motivation.

Stress theory recognized the multidimensional nature of stress, considering that stress is transactional and largely dependent on individual perception. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) psychological stress model proposes that individuals constantly evaluate the events they encounter and that these evaluations include primary and secondary cognitive evaluations. Primary assessments are needed to identify and evaluate the event. Irrational beliefs, especially those that reflect demands (e.g., "I must succeed") are considered an important part of primary assessment (Hyland et al., 2014). Irrational beliefs are rigid, excessive, and irrational beliefs that are thought to be organized like evaluation schemes (DiGiuseppe, 1996) and are associated with greater stress and anxiety (e.g., Turner, 2016). Therefore, irrational beliefs about

performance may disrupt the primary evaluation process (David, 2003; David, Lynn, & Ellis, 2010). Secondary appraisals are seen as appraisals of resources used to deal with the perceived situation. Therefore, if insufficient resources are perceived in a given situation, an maladaptive stress response (threat) will occur. Conversely, if sufficient resources are perceived, an adaptive stress response (challenge) will occur.

In more contemporary challenge and threat theory, the Blascovich and Mendes (2000) biopsychosocial (BPS) model sees challenge as an adaptive approach to a motivated situation (for example, a personally relevant situation such as a competition or interview), whereas threat is a maladaptive one. In challenge and threat theory, the cognitive appraisal process is the central mediator of challenge and threat, and the BPS model distinguishes between both demand and resource appraisals as part of this process. Demand assessments consist of a perception of danger, uncertainty, and required effort. For example, the coaches' team may be losing against a less respected opponent (danger to self-esteem), the coach is unsure how this will affect their job security (uncertainty), and they believe that significant resources will be needed to be successful. Resource assessments are about how an individual copes with demands and include skills, knowledge, and dispositional factors (eg, self-esteem, sense of control, personality traits). For example, if a coach remembers previous games won in a losing situation (skills and experience), is confident in their tactical understanding (knowledge), and often sees stressors as a challenge, they are more likely to face challenges. Challenge and threat theory provides a more accurate way to examine coaching stress and allows for the assessment of stress as a multidimensional rather than a one-sided construct in line with contemporary theory and research (Jones et al., 2009). This study contributes to existing research in several ways. This study explains the relationships between coaching and coaching behavior. The theory argues that threat is related to avoidance goals that keep the individual away from undesirable situations (Blascovich, 2014). One study showed that threat caused more freezing, avoidance stances, and less smiling during a social interaction task (Mendes et al., 2007). Research in sports also shows that challenge is associated with superior performance compared to threat (e.g., Moore et al., 2012; Turner et al., 2012), but no studies have examined a trainer sample. Additionally, while some studies have examined the role of irrational beliefs in cognitive assessment (e.g., David et al., 2002), research has not yet explored the relationships between coaches' irrational beliefs and challenge and threat through sports literature. The literature shows that the behavior of coaches and their relationships with their athletes is a stressful activity that can negatively affect. Although research findings have identified the causal components of coach stress, there is a lack of research examining the multidimensional nature of stress and the idea that stress can be both adaptive and maladaptive (Fletcher & Scott, 2008).

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the recent thoughts and opinions of coaches, especially regarding the stressful event.

## METHOD

### Research Model

In this study, one of the qualitative research methods, phenomenon, was used. Phenomenology focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have a detailed and deep understanding of. These phenomena, which we encounter in different ways, such as events, experiences, perceptions and or situations, can be encountered in different ways in our daily lives. However, this does not mean that we fully understand these facts. Therefore, phenomenology is used for studies that aim to investigate phenomena that we frequently

encounter on a daily basis, that are not alien to us but whose meaning we cannot fully comprehend, and constitute a suitable research ground (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

### **Study Group**

The study group of the research was limited to the coaches who lived in the Eastern Anatolia Region, received the Turkish Football Federation Grassroots C Certificate and served as a coach or assistant coach in various teams for at least 5 matches in this field. The research group was determined by the criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposive sampling methods, which allows to study and review all situations that meet some important predetermined criteria (Başaran, 2017), and criteria can be prepared by the researcher or can be prepared in advance. Within the scope of the research, a total of 105 coaching certificate holders were interviewed. The interview forms, which were deemed not to create sufficient content, were excluded from the evaluation, and the interviews with 83 participants, who were thought to have reached the saturation of the data, were evaluated.

### **Data Collection Tools and Process**

In order to obtain the research data, a personal information form and semi-structured questions were prepared for qualitative interview. Demographic questions and semi-structured stress questions were collected on a voluntary basis through individual interviews with the Sony ICD-PX240 4GB Voice Recorder.

#### ***Personal Information Form***

The personal information form has been prepared by the researcher in order to determine independent variables such as gender, age, education status and city of residence.

#### ***Semi-structured interview form***

Within the scope of the research, semi-structured interview technique was used, in which the predetermined interview plan was applied exactly to the participant, as well as flexible interviews where new questions could be asked (Karasar, 2015). During the creation of the data collection tools, firstly, draft forms were prepared by scanning the relevant literature depending on the stress they may encounter before the match, during the match and after the match, which is the focus of the research. These forms were arranged and finalized after the opinions of three field experts. The interviews were conducted online. In the interview content, 3 questions were included, apart from demographic questions;

- ✓ What are the things that cause stress before the match?
- ✓ What are the things that cause stress during the match?
- ✓ What are the things that cause stress after the match?

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained from the answers given by the participants were organized in a logical way according to the explanation, association, pre-conceptualization of the collected data and then the emerging concepts, and the content analysis method was used to determine the themes that explain the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this study, the codes were reached as a result of the analyzes made, and these codes were grouped under themes after being categorized. However, a table was created by ordering the collected data according to their frequencies.

**FINDINGS**

The findings of the study were analyzed in two parts. In the first part, the demographic characteristics of the participants are included, while in the second part, the frequency distribution of the themes and sub-themes created by the content analysis technique is included. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants. In this study, which aims to determine the stress factors in coaches, four main themes emerged as a result of the interviews with the coaches: "organizational stress", "personal stress", "uncertainty" and "performance stress". The sub-themes within each theme and the codes for these sub-themes are explained below (Table.2).

**Table 1.** Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

	All participants	Female	Male	Age
	n=83(%100.0)	n=4 (%4.8)	n=79 (%95.2)	n=32,24 ±4,14
Variable and frequency values				
Education level	City			
High School	22	%26,5	Van	8 9,52%
Undergraduate	56	%67,5	Bitlis	6 7,14%
Postgraduate	5	%6,0	Iğdir	5 5,95%
			Muş	5 5,95%
			Hakkari	5 5,95%
			Elazığ	7 8,33%
			Erzincan	6 7,14%
			Tunceli	5 5,95%
			Ardahan	5 5,95%
			Bingöl	6 7,14%
			Ağrı	5 5,95%
			Kars	5 5,95%

Descriptive statistics about the participants are given in Table 1. Accordingly, 95.2% of the study, in which n=83 participants participated, consisted of male participants. While there are 56 individuals with undergraduate education, 26.5% of the high school level shows the education level of the participants. In the living city variable, it is seen that the number of participants is close to each other.

**Table 2.** Categories and Codes of Stressful Events Experienced by the Coaches Before the Match, During the Match and After the Match

Themes								
Sub-themes and Frequency Values								
	Organisational stress(16)	f	Interpersonal stress(31)	f	Uncertainty (22)	f	Organisational stress(16)	f
Sub-themes	Management	(2)	Player selection	(2)	Time pressures	(5)	Player performance	(4)
	Logistics	(3)	Player behaviour/attitude	(13)	Training environment	(9)	Coach Performance	(7)
	Financially	(2)	Parents	(6)	Unforeseen circumstances	(5)	Game strategy	(1)
	Colleagues incompetence	(1)	Conflict with other coaches	(1)	Officials	(3)	Assessment/observation	(12)
	Administration	(4)	Challenging group	(7)			Results	(5)
	Lack of support	(3)	Player fearing injury	(1)			Level of competition	(3)
	Time pressure	(1)	Player emotions	(1)			Player injury	(1)
							Apprehension Before game	(2)
							Impact of personal issues	(1)

In line with the answers given by the participants, the themes and sub-themes were created by scanning the literature. Accordingly, the themes related to the stress experienced by the coaches before, during and after the match consist of organizational stress (n=16), personal stress (n=31), uncertainty (n=22), and performance stress (n=36). Sub-themes related to the themes (see Table.2) are also seen.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

When studies on stress are examined, it is known that different occupational groups are generally exposed to stress (Haberman 2004, Van Dick et al. 1999, Gorter 2005, Guthrie et al. (1999), and coaching is also considered a stressful occupation (Gould et al., 2002) In this study, in which the factors causing stress of the coaches were examined, the sources of stress of the coaches were determined by the opinions of the coaches. As a result of the semi-structured interviews, the stress sources that the coaches experienced were gathered under 4 themes and the sub-themes and frequency values related to the themes were formed. The themes, sub-themes and frequency values created in line with the answers given regarding their opinions will be evaluated and discussed respectively in the light of the literature.

First of all, when the demographic characteristics of the participants are examined, it is seen that a total of 83 participants are distributed as 4 females and 79 males. The mean age of the participants was  $32.24 \pm 4.14$  years. Considering their educational status, undergraduate students are in the majority, followed by high school and graduate graduation. It is seen that the highest density within the scope of the city of residence is Van, Erzurum, Malatya. According to the opinions of the participants, organizational stress is (n=16), personal stress is (n=31), uncertainty is (n=22) and performance stress is (n=36). When the findings related to the sub-theme of the organizational stress theme were examined, it was stated that the most answer was due to the factor "from the manager (n=4)". When we look at the literature, some studies on the stress factor originating from the manager, having to work with insufficiently trained personnel, insufficient wages and financial conditions, working in an unsafe environment, conflict between employees, uncertainties in duties, instability in the task, not having sufficient equipment and workload. (Altuntaş & Seren, 2010).

When the themes were examined, it was seen that the most sub-theme was "Actor Attitude/Behavior (n=13) factor in the personal stress theme created. Attitudes and behaviors in individuals can vary according to the job. Scales and studies on fan attitudes and athletes (Çakır et al., 2023; Sargın and Güleşçe, 2022; İlkım et al., 2023) show what these attitudes stem from and provide answers regarding its sub-dimensions. The stress factor originating from the parent, which is a sub-theme of the personal stress sub-theme, also constitutes the majority of the answers given. Cosh and Tully (2015) stated that elite level athletes have a very important role in the development of their attitudes to cope with stress, support from coaches and parents, in ensuring the successful integration of sports and education, and that they can develop a special coping response to the consequences arising from stress. At the same time, Şimşek et al. (2023), in their study, emphasized that as sports move away from physical activity, stress decreases success and accordingly they exhibit negative behaviors in their normal lives. Holt and Hogg (2002) emphasized that there is a difference in coping with stress between male and female athletes. Goyen and Anshel (1998) emphasized that they use problem-focused coping strategies against attitudes and behaviors that occur in stressful situations. Campen and Roberts (2001); Philippe et al., (2004) reached the finding of Dollen et al., (2015) that the sources of stress between team sports and individual sports coaches also differ on player attitudes and behaviors.

Among the sub-themes constituting the theme of uncertainty stemming from stress, "educational environment" was emphasized the most by the coach. It is seen in studies that the educational environment affects the success, happiness and motivation of students (Özışık, 2019) and takes them away from stress. The quality and appropriate educational environment not only provides psychological and spiritual relief to individuals, but also reveals the value given to the work done. At the same time, while the performance of the coaches in quality and appropriate training environments increases, the negative experiences they experience may reveal stressful situations for the coach and the club.

Finally, when the answers given the most in the sub-theme of the performance stress theme are examined, it is seen that the sub-theme is "evaluation / observation (n=12)." With the introduction of the constructivist approach into our education system, it has become necessary to make various changes in both learning-teaching processes and measurement and evaluation practices, and it is seen that preferring a student-centered learning approach as opposed to passive learning has an effect on the coaches who are in the status of a teacher or trainer. Therefore, incorrect evaluation and observation may cause distress and stress in terms of the decisions made by the coaches. Smoll and Smith (1984) observed the behavior of trainers during training and examined the effects of these behaviors on young athletes. In the findings of the study, it was observed that the responses of the coaches to the attitudes of the athletes had significant effects on the development of the athletes. At the same time, students who participate in university club sports have been shown to develop life-enhancing skills such as coping with stress, maintaining/improving physical fitness, forming friendships and feeling good about oneself(ed. Kanny et al,2022).

As a result, stress, which is the problem of modern times, has become a natural part of our lives as a result of being a modern society and living very fast and active. In the century we live in, no matter what job people do, they lead a large part of their lives by pushing their own abilities and limits. Whether a person earns his living as a member of a public or private sector organization or provides services without being directly dependent on an organization, it is inevitable to meet the concept of stress.

### **Recommendations**

- The productivity of managers can be increased by reducing bureaucratic processes from sources that cause stress.
  - By creating a warm and friendly environment in the workplace, the effects of this source of stress can be reduced. This arrangement will contribute to labor peace.
  - The effects of this stress-causing source can be reduced by reducing the excessive workload to the optimal level. In this way, managers can be helped to increase their success.
  - The performance and efforts of managers can be increased by giving them the opportunity to advance in the profession and to develop themselves.
  - The effects of this source of stress can be reduced to an appropriate level by solving financial problems. Managers who have reduced these problems can stop dealing with other job search and job offers from competitors and focus better on their work.
  - With time management, managers can get rid of time pressure by reducing the stress caused by compelling time constraints related to their work. This may increase the accuracy of their decisions.
  - Managers can minimize the stress caused by trying to complete more than one job at the same time with good planning.
- .When evaluated in terms of recreational sports activities, low-intensity physical activities are recommended in terms of health and it is also known that cognitive and behavioral activities reduce stress (ed. Atılgan, 2020).



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***Author(s)' statements on ethics and conflict of interest***

**Ethics statement:** We hereby declare that research/publication ethics and citing principles have been considered in all the stages of the study. We take full responsibility for the content of the paper in case of dispute.

**Conflicts of Interest:** There are no conflicts of interest declared by the authors.

**Funding:** None