

## Investigation of the Relationship Between Role Ambiguity and Burnout Levels in Team Athletes

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### Abstract

*The aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between role ambiguity and burnout levels in team athletes. Descriptive relational survey model was used in the study. The population of the study consists of team sports athletes studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University Yaşar Doğu Faculty of Sports Sciences. The sample of the study consists of 161 team sports athletes chosen with random sampling method among the students of the aforementioned faculty. In the study, "Role Ambiguity Scale" and "The Sport Burnout Inventory" were used as data collection instrument. As a result of the analysis conducted, no significant difference was found between the groups in terms of the variables of gender and state of income. While significant difference was found in the sub-dimension of "Role Responsibility and Performance Criterion", no difference was found in the other sub-dimensions. Weak and moderate significant associations were found between total scores of the answers given by athletes to role ambiguity and burnout scales. According to the results of the study, it can be said that the ambiguity of the responsibilities of athletes has an influence on burnout levels. Thus, it is thought that misdirection of decision makers in team sports for the responsibilities of athletes can cause negative effects on the athletes' burnout levels.*

**Keywords:** Sports, role ambiguity, burnout

## Takım Sporları ile İlgilenen Sporcularda Rol Belirsizliđi ile Tükenmiřlik Düzeyleri Arasındaki İliřkinin İncelenmesi

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### Öz

*Bu alıřmanın amacı takım sporcularının rol belirsizliđi ile tükenmiřlik düzeyleri arasındaki iliřkinin incelenmesidir. alıřmada betimsel nitelik taşıyan iliřkisel tarama modeli kullanılmıřtır. Arařtırmanın evreni, Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi Yařar Dođu Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi'nde öğrenim gören takım sporcuları oluřturmaktadır. Arařtırmanın örneklemini ise, belirtilen fakülteden tesadüfi örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilen 161 takım sporcusu oluřturmaktadır. alıřmada veri toplama aracı olarak "Rol Belirsizliđi envanteri ile "Spor Tükenmiřliđi Envanteri" kullanılmıřtır. Yapılan analiz neticesinde cinsiyet ve gelir durumu deđiřkenine göre gruplar arasında farklılık tespit edilmemiřtir. Rol belirsizliđi alt boyutlarından biri olan "Rolün Getirdiklerini Bilme" alt boyutunda anlamlı düzeyde farklılařma tespit edilirken, diđer alt boyutlarda farklılık bulunmamıřtır. Sporcuların rol belirsizliđi ve tükenmiřlik ölçeklerine verdikleri cevaplara ait toplam puanlar arasında zayıf ve orta düzeyde anlamlı iliřkiler tespit edilmiřtir. Bu alıřma sonucuna göre sporcuların üstlenmiř oldukları rollerin belirsizliklerinin tükenmiřlik düzeylerine etki ettiđi söylenebilir. Dolayısıyla, takım sporlarında karar vericilerin sporculara karřı üstlenecekleri roller hususunda yanlıř yönlendirmeler yapmaları, onların tükenmiřlik düzeylerinde olumsuz etki oluřturabilir.*

**AnahtarKelimeler:** Spor, rol belirsizliđi, tükenmiřlik.

## Introduction

Today, as a result of match analysis for team sports, it is known that the positions played by athletes or the roles they have undertaken are effective on teams' success in competitions. The roles athletes have undertaken have very big significance in revealing their performance and abilities better. It is thought that role ambiguity, which is the exact opposite of this situation, will have negative effects on athletes' performances. Role ambiguity is defined as individuals' not having enough information about the behaviours they will show or in the roles they will undertake and the individuals' not knowing what is expected of them (Sager, 1994). This situation can be expressed as individuals' not being able to perceive clearly the responsibilities given to them. According to Sawyer (1992), if individuals know the method to fulfil their responsibilities or roles, they will know how to get away from role ambiguity. Similarly, it is also obvious in sport that for athletes to successfully fulfil the roles attributed to them, they should know how to fulfil those roles. It can be said that role ambiguity will have negative effects on mental burnout levels of athletes in addition to their success. Burnout is explained as fatigue, low level of success and energy depletion of individuals in the face of excessive demands (Freudenberger, 1975). Burnout in sport is defined as frustration and physical and mental fatigue of athletes resulting from intense participation in sport activities (Raedeke and Smith, 2001). As the level of burnout increases in athletes, it can be said that this will adversely affect their loyalty to sports, their stress, role confusion and role ambiguity.

When studies conducted on role ambiguity in the field of sport sciences are examined, studies conducted after 2000s can be found. It can be seen that studies conducted are on areas such as cognitive and somatic anxiety (Beauchamp, Bray, Eys and Carron, 2003); role conflict (Beauchamp and Bray, 2001) and social loafing (Hoigaard, Fuglestad, Peters, Cuyper, Backer and Boen, 2010). The aim of this study is to define the relationship between athletes' burnout levels and their states of having sufficient information about the behaviours they show and knowing what is expected of them.

## **Material And Method**

In the study, approval was taken from Ondokuz Mayıs University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee with 20/12/2019 dated and 2019/438 numbered decision to apply the scales and collect the data.

## **Research Model**

This study is a descriptive study with relational survey model. In studies with survey model, an existing situation is described as it is (Karasar, 2009). In studies based on relational survey model, the aim is “to analyse the relationship between two or more variables without interfering with these variables” (Büyüköztürk et al., 2010). The present study analysed the association between athletes’ role ambiguity and burnout levels. Statistical analyses were used to find out whether role ambiguity and burnout levels of athletes differed in terms of their demographic information and to find out the association between these.

## **Population and Sample of the Study**

The population of the study consists of sub-elite team sports athletes (Rugby, Football, Volleyball, Basketball, Handball) studying at Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University Yaşar Doęu Faculty of Sport Sciences. The sample of the study consists of 161 team sports athletes who were chosen with random sampling method among students studying at Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University Yaşar Doęu Faculty of Sport Sciences.

## **Data Collection Instruments**

A personal information form prepared by the researchers, and two scales, the validity and reliability studies of which had been conducted (Role Ambiguity Scale and The Sport Burnout Inventory), were used in the study.

Personal information form consists of items to find out the age, gender, family income level, sport age, duration of injury and branch of the

athletes who participated in the study. Role Ambiguity Scale, which was developed by Beauchamp and Bray (2001) and which was adapted by Davarcı (2008), has 7 items. This scale, which was developed to find out role ambiguity of athletes, has two sub-dimensions. These are "Role Responsibility and Performance Criterion" and "Knowing of Role Requirement". Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the 7-Likert type measurement instrument were .77 for Role Responsibility and Performance Criterion sub-dimension and .72 for Knowing of Role Requirement sub-dimension.

Sport Burnout Inventory: The inventory which was developed by Salmela-Aro et al. (2009) under the name "School Burnout Inventory" to find out the school exhaustion levels of students was adapted to the field of sport by Sorkkila et al. (2017). The inventory was adapted into Turkish culture by Çam et al. (2019). Sport Burnout Inventory consists of three sub-dimensions. These are "cynicism", "exhaustion" and "inadequacy". High scores taken from Sport Burnout Inventory, which is a 5-Likert type measurement instrument, shows that the participant's burn out level is high.

## Data Analysis

In the study, reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha coefficients) were found to check the internal consistency of the answers given to scale items. The estimated reliability coefficient was 0,872 for Role Ambiguity Scale which was given to athletes who participated in the study voluntarily; in terms of sub-dimensions, reliability coefficient was found as 0,919 for Role Responsibility and Performance Criterion and as 0,628 for Knowing of Role Requirement. Estimated reliability coefficient for Sport Burnout Inventory was 0,883; in terms of sub-dimensions, reliability coefficient was found as 0,770 for exhaustion, as 0,802 for cynicism and as 0,627 for inadequacy. In data analysis, the assumption normality was evaluated with Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test ( $P < 0,05$ ). Mann Whitney U test was used to find out differences between the scores for gender, while Kruskal Wallis H test was used to find out the differences among the scores for level of income and branches. The relationship between athletes' role ambiguity and burnout levels was ana-

lysed with Kendall's tau b correlation coefficient. SPSS 21.0 V. (Statistical Package For Social Scientists for Windows Release 21) statistical program was used for the analysis of data obtained from the study and the results were considered as significant at  $P < 0,05$  level.

## Results

The statistics relating to the differences among total scores and sub-dimension scores of role ambiguity and burnout levels of team athletes studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University in terms of the athletes' gender, age, sport age, level of income, branch and duration of injury were presented in Table 1-3, while the correlations between the scales (Role Ambiguity in Athletes and Sport Burnout Inventory) was presented in Table 4.

*Table 1. Athletes' role ambiguity and burnout levels in terms of gender*

	Gender	n	Mean	SD	Median	IQR	P
Knowing of Role Requirement	Male	98	6,30	3,83	5,00	6,00	0,181
	Female	63	6,73	3,35	6,00	5,00	
Role Responsibility and Performance Criterion	Male	98	8,54	5,88	7,00	6,00	0,490
	Female	63	7,74	5,31	6,00	5,00	
Role Ambiguity Total Score	Male	98	14,84	8,90	12,00	11,25	0,656
	Female	63	14,47	7,53	14,00	9,00	
Exhaustion	Male	98	8,70	3,66	8,00	5,00	0,246
	Female	63	9,42	3,88	8,00	4,00	
Cynicism	Male	98	6,03	3,06	5,00	5,00	0,405
	Female	63	6,34	3,00	6,00	4,00	
Inadequacy	Male	98	7,90	3,10	8,00	5,00	0,681
	Female	63	7,69	2,87	8,00	4,00	
Sport Burnout Total Score	Male	98	22,64	8,61	22,00	13,00	0,682
	Female	63	23,47	8,88	23,00	10,00	

Table 1 shows that no significant difference was found in male and female athletes' role ambiguity scale and sport burnout inventory total score and sub-dimension scores according to Mann Whitney U test results ( $P > 0,05$ ).

**Table 2. Athletes' role ambiguity and burnout levels in terms of family level of income**

	Family level of income	n	Mean	SD	Median	IQR	P
Knowing of Role Requirement	Income>Expense	18	5,55	3,60	3,50	5,25	0,090
	Income=Expense	128	6,46	3,67	5,00	6,00	
	Income<Expense	15	7,66	3,37	7,00	6,00	
Role Responsibility and Performance Criterion	Income>Expense	18	7,27	4,84	5,50	4,25	0,492
	Income=Expense	128	8,08	5,33	7,00	5,00	
	Income<Expense	15	10,60	8,52	8,00	9,00	
Role Ambiguity Total Score	Income>Expense	18	12,83	8,03	10,00	9,75	0,175
	Income=Expense	128	14,54	8,02	13,00	10,00	
	Income<Expense	15	18,26	10,95	14,00	13,00	
Exhaustion	Income>Expense	18	8,16	4,13	7,50	6,00	0,443
	Income=Expense	128	9,05	3,69	8,00	5,00	
	Income<Expense	15	9,40	3,94	8,00	4,00	
Cynicism	Income>Expense	18	5,38	2,78	4,50	4,50	0,395
	Income=Expense	128	6,19	3,01	6,00	5,00	
	Income<Expense	15	6,73	3,47	5,00	5,00	
Inadequacy	Income>Expense	18	7,38	3,12	7,50	5,50	0,780
	Income=Expense	128	7,92	3,03	8,00	4,00	
	Income<Expense	15	7,53	2,77	8,00	4,00	
Sport Burnout Total Score	Income>Expense	18	20,94	9,31	18,00	15,75	0,443
	Income=Expense	128	23,17	8,62	23,00	11,00	
	Income<Expense	15	23,66	8,62	22,00	8,00	

Kruskal Wallis H test results showed that no significant difference was found in role ambiguity scale and sport burnout inventory total score and sub-dimension scores in terms of the athletes' family income level ( $P>0,05$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 3. Athletes' Role Ambiguity and Burnout Levels in terms of branches**

	Branch	n	Mean	SD	Median	IQR	P
Knowing of Role Requirement	Rugby	33	6,72	3,62	6,00 b	6,00	0,045
	Football	47	5,36	3,19	4,00 c	5,00	
	Volleyball	28	7,57	3,19	7,00 a	6,00	
	Basketball	31	7,32	4,30	6,00 b	7,00	
	Handball	22	5,86	2,56	5,00 c	4,25	
Role Responsibility and Performance Criterion	Rugby	33	9,33	6,54	7,00	6,00	0,258
	Football	47	7,55	5,32	6,00	4,00	
	Volleyball	28	7,96	5,14	7,00	5,00	
	Basketball	31	9,32	6,21	8,00	6,00	
	Handball	22	6,81	4,55	5,00	4,00	
Role Ambiguity Total Score	Rugby	33	16,06	9,36	14,00	12,00	0,140
	Football	47	12,91	7,45	11,00	9,00	

	Volleyball	28	15,53	8,43	14,00	12,25	
	Basketball	31	16,64	9,46	14,00	12,00	
	Handball	22	12,68	6,19	11,00	6,25	
Exhaustion	Rugby	33	8,57	3,24	8,00	3,50	0,847
	Football	47	9,31	4,81	8,00	9,00	
	Volleyball	28	9,39	3,78	9,00	6,25	
	Basketball	31	9,03	2,86	9,00	4,00	
	Handball	22	8,31	3,06	8,00	5,00	
Cynicism	Rugby	33	6,12	2,81	6,00	5,00	0,969
	Football	47	6,59	3,79	6,00	6,00	
	Volleyball	28	6,25	2,92	5,50	5,50	
	Basketball	31	5,74	2,25	6,00	4,00	
	Handball	22	5,72	2,74	5,00	5,25	
Inadequacy	Rugby	33	7,81	3,15	8,00	4,50	0,957
	Football	47	8,04	3,49	8,00	6,00	
	Volleyball	28	7,71	2,70	8,00	4,75	
	Basketball	31	7,96	2,70	8,00	4,00	
	Handball	22	7,31	2,69	8,00	5,00	
Sport Burnout Total Score	Rugby	33	22,51	7,76	22,00	12,50	0,944
	Football	47	23,95	11,09	22,00	20,00	
	Volleyball	28	23,35	8,87	23,00	13,00	
	Basketball	31	22,74	6,28	23,00	9,00	
	Handball	22	21,36	7,24	21,00	11,50	

Kruskal Wallis H test results showed that no significant difference was found in role ambiguity scale and sport burnout inventory total score and sub-dimension scores of the athletes except for Knowing of Role Requirement scores in terms of the athletes' branch (Table 3). While volleyball players had the highest knowing of role requirement scores, football and handball players had the lowest.

No significant association was found between some demographic characteristics (age, sport age and injury time) and role ambiguity and burnout level total scores of the athletes who participated in the study ( $P>0,05$ ; Table 4). However, weak (for example:  $r=0,257$  for SBTS and KRR;  $r=0,241$  for E and KRR etc.), and moderate significant correlations (for example:  $r=0,311$  for SBTS and RATS;  $r=0,324$  for SBTS and RRPC;  $r=0,303$  for E and RATS etc.) were found between total scores of athletes' answers to role ambiguity and burnout scales ( $P<0,001$ ; Table 4).

**Table 4. Levels of association between athletes' demographic characteristics and role ambiguity and sport burnout scores**

		Age	SA	I	RATS	KRR	RRPC	SBTS	E	C
SA	r	,153								
	p	,011								
I	r	,095	,116							
	p	,144	,065							
RATS	r	-,030	-,031	-,057						
	p	,618	,587	,359						
KRR	r	-,028	-,043	-,074	,772					
	p	,651	,467	,246	<,001					
RRPC	r	-,014	-,029	-,030	,768	,491				
	p	,823	,627	,640	<,001	<,001				
SBTS	r	,037	,014	-,069	,311	,257	,324			
	p	,522	,802	,259	,000	,000	,000			
E	r	,054	,023	-,072	,303	,241	,317	,758		
	p	,370	,687	,248	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001		
C	r	,050	,079	-,005	,284	,255	,271	,767	,601	
	p	,412	,181	,944	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001	
IA	r	,005	-,052	-,104	,230	,178	,285	,719	,491	,557
	p	,928	,367	,098	<,001	,002	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001

SA: Sport age; I: Injury; RATS: Role Ambiguity Total Score; KRR: Knowing of Role Requirement; RRPC: Role Responsibility and Performance Criterion; SBTS: Sport Burnout Total Score; E: Exhaustion; C: Cynicism; IA: Inadequacy

## Discussion And Conclusion

This study was conducted to find out the association between role ambiguity and burnout levels of team athlete students attending Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University Yaşar Doğu Faculty of Sport Sciences during 2019-2020 Academic Year. While no significant difference was found in the scales used in terms of the variables of gender and level of education, significant difference was found only in knowing of responsibility sub-dimension of role ambiguity scale in terms of the variable of branch.

In the study, when role ambiguity and sport burnout inventory sub-dimensions and total scores were examined in terms of the variable of gender, no significant difference was found. According to this result, it can be said that role ambiguity and burnout states of men and women have the same level of effect. When studies conducted on role ambiguity are examined, it can be said that no significant difference was found in the study conducted on athletes by Davarcı (2008). This result is in parallel with the results of the present study. Significant difference was found

in terms of the variable of gender in a study conducted on bank employees by Ok (2004) and this result was not in parallel with the results of the present study. When studies conducted on burnout are examined, it can be said that the results of the studies conducted by Bayköse et al. (2019) and Medeni (2018) are not in parallel with the results of the present study. When the literature was reviewed, it was found that significant differences were found in terms of the variable of gender in studies conducted by Akbulut (2018), Özcoşan (2018), alışkan (2019), Dağcı (2019) and Gök (2019). These results are not similar to the results of the present study.

When role ambiguity and sport burnout inventory sub-dimensions and total scores were examined in terms of the variable of income level, no significant difference was found. According to this result, it can be said that all income level categories have the same level of effect on role ambiguity and burnout states. When the literature is reviewed, no studies were found on role ambiguity in terms of the variable of level of income. In terms of burnout levels, the results of the study conducted by Dağcı (2019) and the results of the present study are similar. In a study by Türkman (2017), significant difference was found in emotional burnout sub-dimension in terms of the variable of level of income. This result is not partly in parallel with the results of the present study.

While no significant difference was found in sport burnout inventory sub-dimensions and total scores in terms of the variable of branch, significant difference was found in knowing of role requirement in role ambiguity scale. According to this result, score averages of volleyball players were found to be higher than the score averages of other branches. This result can be due to the fact that other branch categories have more struggles in them and are tougher than volleyball and that athletes are more careful in fulfilling their roles. When the literature about role ambiguity was reviewed, no significant difference was found in a study conducted on athletes by Davarcı (2008). When the literature about burnout was reviewed, significant difference was found in Özcoşan (2018)'s study in terms of the variable of branch. The results found are not in parallel with the results of our study.

When the correlation coefficient results of the variables of age, sport age and duration of injury were examined, no significant association was

found between role ambiguity and burnout levels. A moderate significant association was found between athletes' role ambiguity and burnout levels. Therefore, it can be said that the ambiguity of the positions of the athletes, that is their roles, has an effect on their burnout levels, even if partially. As a result, it can be said that misdirection of decision makers (trainer, club manager, president, etc.) about the roles athletes will assume, especially in team sports will have a negative effect on athletes' burnout levels. In addition, according to the results of the study, it is thought that directing the athletes to their roles in the team by considering their performance and athletes' adapting these roles will minimize their burnout levels and contribute to the integrity of the team.

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