

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The relationship between swimming trainers' empathy levels and their psychological resistance

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** In this study, it was aimed to evaluate the relationship between swimming coaches' empathy skills and psychological resilience.

**Methods:** This study was planned as a descriptive relational study. The study was carried out in 168 swimming coaches working in Konya. In data collection; A personal information form, prepared by researchers and questioning socio-demographic characteristics, Empathy Scale and Psychological Resilience Scale for Adults were used.

**Results:** The mean age of the individuals was 29.64±6.71, 50% were women, 54.8% were single, 88.1% were university graduates, 45.2% lived with their spouses and children, % It was determined that 71.4% perceived their income as medium and 61.9% perceived their health as good. When the empathy and resilience levels of the individuals were evaluated, the mean score of the empathy scale was 63.02±5.80 and the mean score of the resilience scale was 123.20±20.06.

**Conclusion:** Empathy and psychological resilience of swimming coaches are at a good level. In terms of empathic levels, men, high school graduates and singles are in the risk group. In terms of psychological resilience, men, high school graduates and those who live alone are in the risk group. It was observed that as the empathy levels of swimming coaches increased, their psychological resilience also increased.

**Keywords:** *swimming coaches, resilience, empathy*

## Introduction

Psychological resilience can be defined as overcoming a challenging or difficult situation. In other words, the resilience process is defined as the individual's exit from the distressing situation and continuing his life [1]. Toland and Carrigan (2011) [2] define resilience as the ability to achieve positive and unexpected success under difficult conditions and to adapt to extraordinary conditions and situations. Negative life events directly affect psychological resilience. In general, not the changes that occur in life, but the number of events perceived as bad by the individual affects the level of resilience of the individual [3]. Stressful situations experienced by the individual are risk factors for the development of psychosocial and physical symptoms in the individual. The individual experiences confusion due to stress and then tries to use his individual power to gain strength, which is considered psychological resilience [4].

Psychological resilience includes the adaptation of the individual to the changes in his life, in the process that occurs as a result of the interaction of risk factors and protective factors when faced with a negative situation [5]. Resilience is a dynamic process that is highly influenced by protective factors. Protective factors are specific competencies, in simple terms, important competencies that occur in the resilience process are the individual's healthy abilities and skills. Competences emerge in three areas: individual competencies, interpersonal competencies and familial competencies [6]. There is a delicate balance between vulnerability and resilience. Sometimes difficulties are more empowering than injuring. There is a dynamic balance between life events that increase a person's sensitivity and protective factors that increase psychological resilience [4].

It is the skill of empathy that enables the person to develop positive attitudes, feelings and thoughts for other living things, starting from his own life by centered on the person. Empathy is putting oneself in the other person's shoes and understanding their feelings and thoughts correctly. At the moment of empathy, the person tries to understand the person in front of him and thanks to this, social problems are minimized. Because understanding the problems of society allows to

find ways to produce solutions. A person with empathy skills can lead his life in agreement with the society [7].

Empathy is the ability to share and understand the mood or feelings of the other person and is a strong communication skill [8]. Being able to empathize has been recognized as a skill. In this case, it cannot be taught, but the empathy skills of people can be developed through education. The aim of empathy training is to further develop the empathy skills of people and to ensure good relations with people of all ages. The training given to develop and improve one's empathy skills focuses on the development of emotional and cognitive skills including empathic response, and includes cognitive elements such as recognizing, evaluating and naming the emotions needed at the empathic stage. There are many studies showing that empathic skill can be improved with education. Researchers especially consider empathic skill as a part of general communication skill [9]. The sensory and cognitive aspects of empathic skills need to be developed equally. Empathic skill is a necessary set of emotions in both cognitive and affective dimensions. Empathy tendency can only be defined by affective skill. The process of acquiring the skills of the person begins in the form of imitation from birth to the period of the personality and continues as a person who is open to help. This situation depends on the environment in which the individual grew up, but gender and genetic factors are important in the tendency of empathy. Empathy skills are seen to be higher in women, but empathy tendency in men is proportional to their upbringing [10].

Empathy does not require us to give rights to the other person. The important thing is to put ourselves in his place and explore his world of thought, perception and emotion. Empathy is a factor that determines success in our bilateral relations with people and directs our social relations. It is a highly important and necessary skill that preserves the fabric of our society. According to Batson, empathy; It means understanding someone's particular emotion and responding appropriately to that emotion. According to Rogers; It is the process of the counselor putting himself in the client's place, entering his own world, understanding his feelings and thoughts correctly, feeling what he is feeling and communicating this situation to him [11]. Swimming

is one of the individual sports branches. Therefore, it requires the coach to deal with the athletes one-on-one and attentively. It is important that the swimming coach has a good ability to empathize and that he is psychologically sound. In this study, it was aimed to evaluate the relationship between swimming coaches' empathy skills and psychological resilience.

### Research questions

1. What are the sociodemographic characteristics of swimming coaches?
2. Does the level of empathy change according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the swimming coaches?
3. Does the psychological resilience level of swimming coaches change according to their socio-demographic characteristics?
4. Is there a relationship between the empathy level of swimming coaches and the level of psychological resilience?

### Method

#### Type of Research

This study was planned as descriptive relational.

### Location and features of the research

The study was carried out in swimming coaches working in swimming pools in Selçuklu district of Konya province.

### Study group of the research

The sample size in the study was calculated in the G\*Power 3.1.9.2 analysis program. With an effect size of 0.3227194, a power of 95%, and a margin of error of 5%, Lök and Bademli (2021) [12] calculated the total psychological resilience score average as 168.

The inclusion criteria of the study were individuals aged 18 and over, literate individuals, and the exclusion criteria were swimming coaches with any chronic mental illness.

### Data collection technique and tools

The data of the study were collected from individuals who were swimming coaches in Selçuklu district of Konya province between January and February 2023. Surveys were collected by online survey method; The data collection process will be terminated after the sufficient number of samples is reached. In data collection; A personal information form, prepared by researchers and questioning socio-demographic characteristics, Empathy Scale and Psychological Resilience Scale for Adults were used.

**Empathy Scale:** The long form of the Empathy Scale [13], which was developed to measure empathy, was translated into Turkish by Bora and Baysan (2009) [14]. The long form of the scale is a measurement tool that has 60 items and is evaluated with 40 items (20 items are excluded from the evaluation as fillers) and produces a score between 0-80. Although the scale items, six of which are scored reversely, include four response options (between "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree"), the two least empathetic response options are scored 0, the moderately empathetic response option 1, and the most empathetic response option 2 points. High scores from the scale indicate a high level of empathy. In the Turkish translation study of the scale, the internal consistency reliability coefficient was 0.85 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was 0.76 [14].

### Resilience scale for adults

The Resilience Scale for Adults with 33 questions, developed by Friborg et al. (2003) [15] and adapted into Turkish by Basım and Çetin (2011) [16], was used to determine the resilience levels of employees. The reliability (Cronbach Alpha) coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.89. It was found that the internal consistency coefficients of the sub-dimensions of the scale ranged between 0.66 and 0.81, and the test-retest reliability ranged between 0.68 and 0.81. Evaluation of scale items was released as in the original study. Before evaluating the questionnaire, apply it to the participants, and at the end of the application, evaluate the answers yourself. You can evaluate

the way you want by considering the 5 boxes opposite the answers, prepared in order to get rid of the acquaintance bias, in a 5-point Likert format. If it is desired to increase psychological resilience as the scores increase, the answer boxes should be evaluated as 12345 from left to right. If this opinion is taken into account, in the scale; Questions 1-3-4-8-11-12-13-14-15-16-23-24-25-27-31-33 will be reverse questions (if it is desired to increase psychological resilience as the scores decrease; answer boxes will be evaluated as 54321 and reverse questions would then be questions 2-5-6-7-9-10-17-18-19-20-21-22-26-28-29-30-32).

### Evaluation of data

The data of the study were evaluated using the statistical package program SPSS for Windows 22.0 (Statistical Package for Social Science). Number of units (n), percentage (%), mean±standard deviation (mean (SD)) values were used as summary statistics. The normal distribution of the data was evaluated with the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and the Q-Q plot. For normally distributed data, two independent samples t-test and one-way anaova test will be used. The results were evaluated at 95% confidence interval and  $p < 0.05$  significance level.

### Ethical dimension

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Sport Sciences for the ethical permission of the study. Before starting the research, informed consent form will be obtained from the individuals. The purpose of the research, its duration and the procedures to be carried out during the research were briefly explained in a language they could understand, the principle of "Informed Consent", the principle of "Autonomy" by stating that individuals could withdraw from the research at any time, and the principle of "Confidentiality and Confidentiality" by stating that individual information would be protected after it was shared with the researcher.

### Results

The average age of the individuals is  $29.64 \pm 6.71$ , 50% are female, 54.8% are single, 88.1% are university graduates, 45.2% live with their spouses and children, 71%, It was determined that 4 of them perceived their income as medium and 61.9% of them perceived their health as good.

When the empathy and resilience levels of the individuals were evaluated, the mean score of the empathy scale was  $63.02 \pm 5.80$  and the mean score of the resilience scale was  $123.20 \pm 20.06$  (Table 1).

When the distribution of the mean scores of empathy levels according to the sociodemographic characteristics of the individuals was examined, it was seen that the empathy level of women was better than that of men, and the difference was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was observed that the empathy level of the university graduates was better than the empathy level of the high school graduate, and the difference was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was observed that the empathy level of the married people was better than the empathy level of the singles, and the difference was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was observed that there was no statistically significant difference between the people living with, perceived income and perceived health level and psychological resilience levels ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 2).

When the distribution of the mean scores of the resilience levels according to the sociodemographic characteristics of the individuals was examined, it was observed that the resilience level of women was better than the level of resilience of men, and the difference was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was observed that the psychological resilience level of university graduates was better than the psychological resilience level of high school graduates, and the difference was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was observed that the resilience level of married people was better

than the resilience level of singles, and the difference was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was observed that there was a statistically significant difference between the people they lived with and their psychological resilience levels, and the difference was caused by those living with their spouse and children ( $p < 0.05$ ). No statistically significant relationship was found between the individuals' perceived income level and perceived health level and their mean scores of psychological resilience ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 3).

**Table 1:** Distribution of Individuals' Empathy and Resilience Scale Mean Scores

Scales	Mean±SD	Min-Max
Empathy Scale	63,02±5,80	19-43
Psychological Resilience Scale	123,20±20,06	74-156

**Table 2:** Distribution of Empathy Levels According to Sociodemographic Characteristics of Individuals

Variables	Empathy Level Mean±SD	Test value p
<b>Gender</b>		
Woman	64,22±5,95	t: 1,023 p:0,02*
Male	61,82±5,67	
<b>Educational Status</b>		
High school graduate	60,05±6,44	t: 0,178 p:0,01*
Graduated from a Universty	66,02±5,73	
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	67,85±5,72	t:1,206 p:0,01*
Single	58,16±5,89	
<b>People Living With</b>		
Alone	62,85±5,57	F: 2,942 p:0,247
With his wife and children	61,88±6,31	
with their children	63,18±5,88	
<b>Perceived Income Level</b>		
Good	62,13±5,44	F: 2,763 p:0,17
Middle	63,65±5,93	
Bad	61,15±5,14	
<b>Perceived Health Status</b>		
Good	63,13±5,57	F: 1,326 p:0,24
Middle	62,84±6,19	
Bad	63,02±5,80	

t: Independent t testi, F: One way ANOVA, \* $p < 0,05$

**Table 3:** Distribution of Psychological Resilience Levels of Individuals by Sociodemographic Characteristics

Variables	Psikolojik Sağlamhk Mean±SD	Test değeri p değeri
<b>Gender</b>		
Woman	125,03±17,71	t: 0,245 p:0,01*
Male	121,36±22,12	
<b>Educational Status</b>		
High school graduate	119,55±20,89	t: 0,694 p:0,02*
Graduated from a Universty	126,29±20,02	
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	124,67±21,35	t:0,614 p:0,04*
Single	121,98±18,96	
<b>People Living With</b>		
Alone	119,59±20,03	F: 4,854 p:0,02*
With his wife and children	<b>134,83±9,61</b>	
with their children	123,92±21,43	
<b>Perceived Income Level</b>		
Good	127,20±20,19	F: 0,217 p:0,22
Middle	121,19±21,07	
Bad	128,69±14,74	
<b>Perceived Health Status</b>		
Good	124,89±19,09	F: 0,278 p:0,64
Middle	120,45±21,41	
Bad	123,20±20,06	

t: Independent t testi, F: One way ANOVA, \* $p < 0,05$

**Table 4:** The Relationship between Individuals' Empathy Level and Psychological Resilience Level

	Empathy Level	Psychological Resilience
Empathy Level	1,00	
Psychological Resilience	r:0,841 p:0,01*	1,00

r: Pearson correlation analysis, \* $p < 0.001$

When the relationship between empathy level and resilience levels of individuals was evaluated, a high positive correlation was found between empathy and resilience level ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $r = 0.841$ , Table 4). As individuals' empathic levels increase, their psychological resilience also increases.

## Discussion

In this study, the relationship between the empathy levels of swimming coaches and their psychological resilience levels was evaluated. It was determined that the empathy level of the trainers was at a good level. Cook et al. (2021) [17] also reported that the level of empathy of swimming coaches was moderate. In their study, Caballero-Guzman and Lafaurie-Villamil (2020) [18] reported that the empathy level of the coaches was at a good level. The stated study findings were similar to the present study findings. This situation can be interpreted as swimming coaches are strong in terms of empathy. It was determined that the psychological resilience level of the trainers was at a good level. Sarkar and Hilton (2020) [19] also reported in their study that the psychological resilience level of swimming coaches is at a good level. Chambers (2008) [8] reported in his study that the psychological resilience level of swimming coaches is at a good level. The stated study findings were similar to the present study findings. This situation can be interpreted as swimming coaches are strong in terms of psychological resilience. Swimming branch improves the psychological resilience and empathy level of individuals and contributes to individuals to feel stronger.

In our study, it was observed that the empathy level of female swimming coaches was better than that of males. Toth and Reinhardt (2019) [20] reported in their study that women have a more empathetic approach than men. The finding of this study was similar to our current study finding. It was determined that the level of empathy of university graduates and married people was better. Zavialhayat et al. (2021) [21], it was reported that the empathy level of university graduates and married people is quite good. This study finding was similar to the current study finding in this respect. In our study, the psychological resilience level of female swimming trainers was found to be better than that of males. Zavialhayat et al. (2021) [21] reported that men had better psychological resilience than women. This study finding is not similar to the current study finding in this respect.

It has been found that those who are university graduates, married and living with their spouse and children have better psychological resilience. Nascimento Junior et al. (2021) [22] reported in their study that the psychological resilience levels of married people are better than those of single or divorced people. Sarkar and Hilton (2020) [19] reported in their study that as the level of education increases, the psychological resilience of swimming coaches increases. In the study of Toland and Carrigan (2011) [2] it was reported that the psychological resilience of swimming coaches who are married and living with their spouse and children is much better than those who live alone and alone. The findings of these studies were similar to the findings of the current study in these aspects.

A high positive correlation was found between the empathy level of swimming coaches and their psychological resilience levels. In the study of Neff and McGehee (2010) [23], it was reported that as the psychological resilience of individuals increases, their empathy levels are more positive. This study finding was similar to the current study finding in this respect.

## Conclusion

Empathy and psychological resilience of swimming coaches are at a good level. In terms of empathic levels, men, high school graduates and singles are in the risk group. In terms of psychological resilience, men, high school graduates and those who live alone are in the risk group. It was observed that as the empathy levels of swimming coaches increased, their psychological resilience also increased.

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Received: March 10, 2023; Accepted: May 05, 2023; Published: May 09, 2023

Citation: Keretli O, Lok S, Lok N. The relationship between swimming trainers' empathy levels and their psychological resistance. *Arch Clin Res Trials*. 2023; 4: 111.

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