



Is Midseason Coaching Change Effective on Professional Footballers in Turkey? A Qualitative Research

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Authors PG and ZO designed the study, wrote the protocol and supervised the work. Author FB assisted in the scoring and computer work. Author PG managed the analyses of the study. Authors PG and ZO wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors ZO and FB managed the literature searches. Authors PG and ZO edited the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to research the effects of midseason coaching changes on professional footballers' psychology and performance. For this purpose case study method, which is one of the qualitative research techniques, was used to acquire data. And in sampling easily accessible case sampling method of purposive sample management was preferred. Study samples are constituted of 58 professional footballers of the ages between 17 and 34 years, having played at least one season in professional sports clubs operating in Izmir of Turkey in the season of 2013-2014 and accepted to participate voluntarily in the study. As a result of the study, the opinions expressed by the professional footballers concerning midseason coaching changes have been observed positive at a rate of 65%, neutral at 36% and negative at 9%. Consequently, midseason coaching changes

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carried out in cases of poor conduct of teams and their performance decrement have positive effects on footballers.

Keywords: Midseason; coaching change; professional footballers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Considering popular culture football is in the lead of sports branches and have been showing rapid development and changes in recent years. And football, which has multiple components in sports industry like manager, coach, footballer, fan has become an ever-growing sector. Coaches and footballers are among the supreme partners of this gigantic sector. That is why the efforts they make are accompanied by a huge pressure. In football, where losses are least tolerated, the cost for poor conduct is mostly picked up by coaches. [1] expressed in his article, that "Like in many European countries, in Turkey clubs also the coaches are chosen as victims in case of poor results or being wide of the mark, firing coaches are much easier than changing team players or revolutionizing in club managements and the teams changing their coaches do not take any advantages from this tendency in the medium term". Similarly [2] expressed that, "the first step taken in the event of failure practiced by many football teams in the world, is coaching change and it is considered as the end of all the failures and the beginning of coming soon successful results, however these coaching changes create partially positive effects within short times.

When analyzed the literature related midseason coach changes, [3] are expressing the opinion that the effects of midseason coaching changes on team performance have been a matter of debate for a long time, whereas [4] are nothing that there is no theoretical or experimental consensus about the effect of midseason coaching change on players' performances. As stated [5] likewise researches that had done on sports data; there is not find certain results regarding the effects of coach turnover about team performance. In the study carried out by [6] three theories on the subject of CEO or coach change rate and its reason were emphasized. These theories are referred to as "common sense theory", "vicious cycle theory", "ritual scapegoating theory" [4,6].

According to the common sense theory, employment of candidates having sufficient experience and professionalism are envisaged to

increase the performance of an organization or club ceasing their failures, whereas vicious cycle theory sets forth that these changes have destructive effects on team performance resulting in downfall. Ritual scapegoating theory advocates that there is no relation between success and performance and success events simply give messages to the fans about measurements taken for necessary corporative changes [4,6].

In the context of coach turnover, different studies revolved around variables like game location, team quality, coaching experimentation or coaching capability. Carrying out both team quality and home team advantage [7]. [8] reached that within the season team performance did not always build up when a coach is expelled [9-11].

The limited literature about the impact of turnover on team quality and home team advantage revolved around the relationship between team quality and home team advantage devoid of considering the effect of coach turnover [12,13]. According to [8] just two studies pointed out the impact on coach turnover within the season on team quality and/or home team advantage. [8] estimated a regression model with using purpose differences to control if there was a substantial turnover impact on the change in team quality and home team advantage [9]. Home advantage in football has long been established as an considerable factor in assining the result of a game. Its entity is certain to affect the manner of sports environment as coaches, referees, sportsmen, supporters and the sports media [14,15]. Basic factors related with be included the common caps of multitude assistance, travel effects, familiarity with local playing conditions, regionalism, bias to referee and psychological effects [14,15].

When examining studies on midseason coaching changes, it was observed that the teams were examined seasonally [4,16-19]. Most researches analysed the impressiveness of refusing the coach by focusing on results of games or on winning percentages [20]. It was found out that to expose statistically team's performances according to coach change intervals taking

season points of teams for one year or different periods as basis was purposed, but neither the effects of this situation on coaches and footballers nor on their performances were examined. To eliminate this shortage in body literature, it was required to examine positive or negative effects on footballers' performance experiencing midseason coaching changes according to their opinions. With its mentioned specification this study differs from others and has great importance in terms of bringing light for researchers intending to conduct studies in this sphere.

2. METHODS

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the effects of midseason coaching changes on professional footballers in Turkey in the 1st league of PTT, according to viewpoints of the professional footballers having experienced midseason coaching changes.

2.2 Samples of the Study

Case study method which is one of the qualitative research techniques has been used in the Study. Qualitative research model was preferred because it is effective at eliciting participants' thoughts, experiences, expectations, suggestions and concerns. And in sampling "easily accessible case sampling" method of purposive sample management was preferred. Study samples are constituted of 58 professional footballers of the ages varying between 17 and 34 years, having played at least one season in Buca, Altınordu, Karşıyaka, Spor Toto clubs participating in 1st League of PTT, Altay participating in 2nd League of Spor Toto and Balçova Yaşamspor club participating in 3rd league of Spor Toto held in Izmir of Turkey and accepted to participate voluntarily in the study.

The data from 83 professional footballers have been acquired in this study. However 8 persons participating in the study have been dismissed due to not having filled personal data section, 17 persons have been fixed not having experienced midseason coaching changes when examining their responds to the questions related to midseason coaching change experiences and as a result of it 17 professional footballers have not been included in study assessment.

2.3 Data Collecting Tool

As a data collecting tool, "interview" approach and "semi-structured interview" form have been developed. The interview form used in the study consists of two sections with personal data of participants and questions prepared with regard to study subject. Personal data form has been prepared according to negotiation with professionals in interview questions sphere. In order to provide the respondents flexibility within a structure, semi-structured interviews were conducted. As [21] notes: *"The semi-structured interview provides the best of both worlds as far as interviewing is concerned, combining the structure of a list of issues to be covered together with the freedom to follow up points as necessary"*.

2.4 Study Question

"What are the effects of midseason coaching changes on psychology and performances of professional footballers?"

2.5 Data Acquiring Methods

For acquiring study data; first of all club managers of professional footballers have been interviewed and informed about the subject of the study and asked for their permission for interviewing the footballers in their clubs. Afterwards the coaches were interviewed and asked for interview form application at times suitable for them.

2.6 Ethical Clearance (Approval)

The footballers have been informed about the study and a voluntary confirmation letter on interview form realization by the courtesy of participants was submitted to sign.

2.7 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Validity and reliability works have been carried out taking into consideration the issues valid for qualitative researches. In this context the findings have been watched out to be consistent and meaningful in themselves for validity works; acquired findings have been provided to be as the comprehensive whole; acquired data are pursuant with the conceptual framework constituted previously. This framework has been a guideline in data collecting and provided practicability in application.

And for reliability works in the study; researcher has defined the methods and phases of the study in a clear and detailed manner; the results have been correlated clearly with the data found out; the methods and processes followed by the researcher have been defined in a detailed manner; raw data of the study have been preserved in a way to be examined by other researchers; study questions have been expressed clearly; study results are pursuant with the data; the data have been collected in a detailed and purposeful manner needed by study questions [22].

3. PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS AND DATA

When examined the profiles of 58 participants having taken place in the study: it has been fixed that their ages were varying between 17-34, at most 36 participants (% 62.1) were high-school graduates according to their educational status, time of their professional footballer experience was varying between most 1-5 years (% 53.4) and 25 participants (% 43.2) working with coaches from 6 to 10 during their professional life (Table 1).

As a result of the acquired data analysis the findings have been gathered under two main themes: Psychological effects and Performance effects. When classified these main themes with their sub-dimensions they have been assessed in of positive, negative and neutral dimensions. These main theme and sub-themes together with the codes they have created are mentioned in Picture 1.

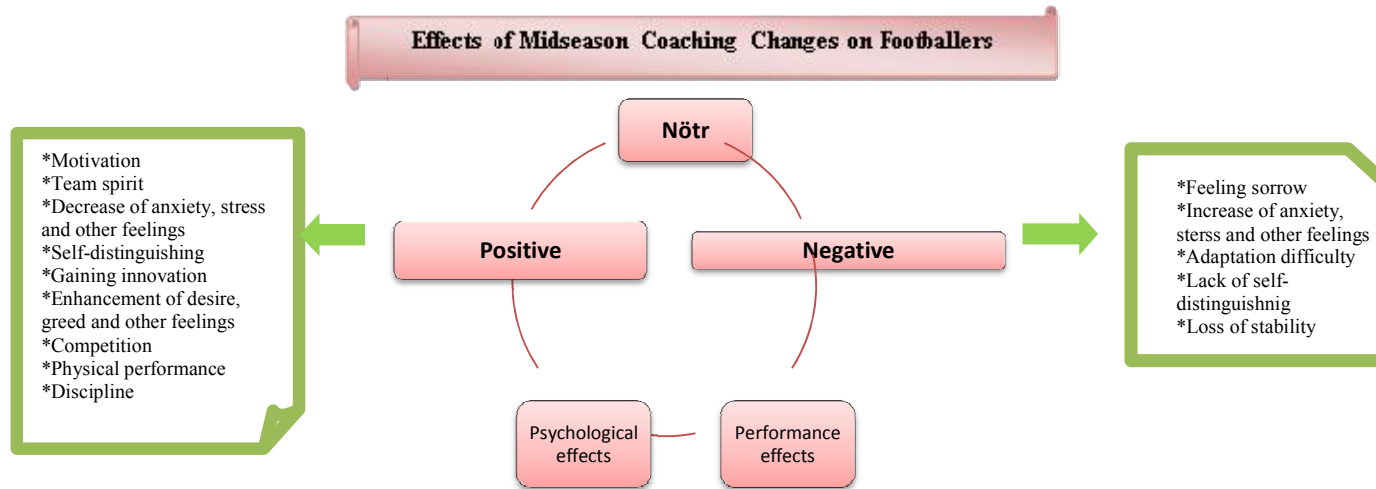
When examined data of the professional footballers having experienced coaching changes; the participants expressing the opinion of positive effects of coaching changes on footballers have been fixed % 65, while 9% of participants have mentioned negative effects of those. Additionally 26% of participants have mentioned neither positive nor negative effects they experienced (Table 2). According to these datas young age professional footballers affected positively more than the old age professional footballers (Fig. 1).

When examined the data in Table 3, some of the participants have indicated to be effected positively by anxiety, stress and other feelings while some of them mentioned to be effected negatively by the same feelings. Increasing the feelings like motivation, team spirit, opportunity of self-distinguishing, gaining innovations, desire, greed have been mentioned by them as positive advantages for competition, physical performance increase while the feelings like sorrow, adaptation difficulty, lack of self-distinguishing and loss of stability in consequence of coach changes have been mentioned by the participants as negative gains.

According to these datas young age and studying in the first levels of their education professional footballers affected positively for the mid-season coach changing more than the old age studying at the university level professional footballers (Figs. 1 and 2). Not very high quality experience footballers effected positively for the mid-season coach changes (Fig. 3). And also most of the professional footballers who changed more than one coaches on the mid-season had a positive effected (Fig. 4).

Table 1. Personal data table

Demographic variables	Category	N	%
Age	17-21	29	50.0
	22-26	21	36.2
	27-34	8	13.8
Educational status	Secondary school	36	62.1
	Undergraduate.	19	32.8
	University graduate.	3	5.1
Professional footballer experience time	1-5 years	31	53.4
	6-10 years	21	36.4
	>10 years	6	10.2
Number of coaches worked with	1-5	12	20.7
	6-10	25	43.2
	11-15	13	22.4
	>15	8	13.7
Total		58	100



Picture 1. Main and subthemes

Table 2. Numerical findings of midseason coaching changes effects on footballers

Effects of midseason coaching changes on footballers	Participants	N	%
Positive	P2,P6,P7,P8,P9,P11,P14,P15,P16,P21,P23,P24,P25,P26,P27,P28,P29,P30,P31,P32,P34,P35,P36,P37P38,P39, P40,P43,P47,P48,P49,P50,P51,P52,P53, P55,P57,P58	38	65
Negative	P1,P19,P41,P44,P46	5	9
Neutral	P3,P4,P5,P10,P12,P13,P17,P18,P20,P22, P33,P42,P45,P54,P56	15	26
Total		58	100

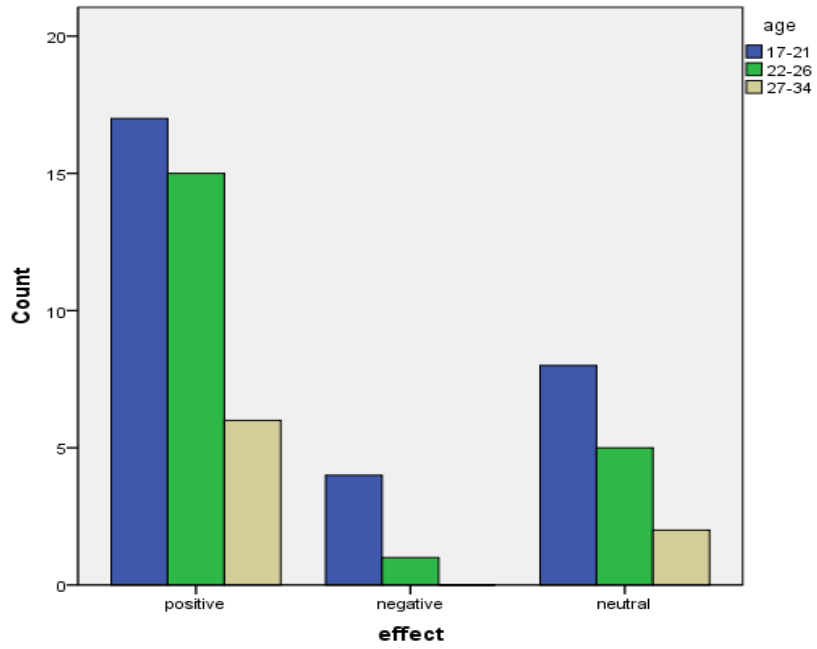


Fig. 1. Positive, negative and neutral effect of age

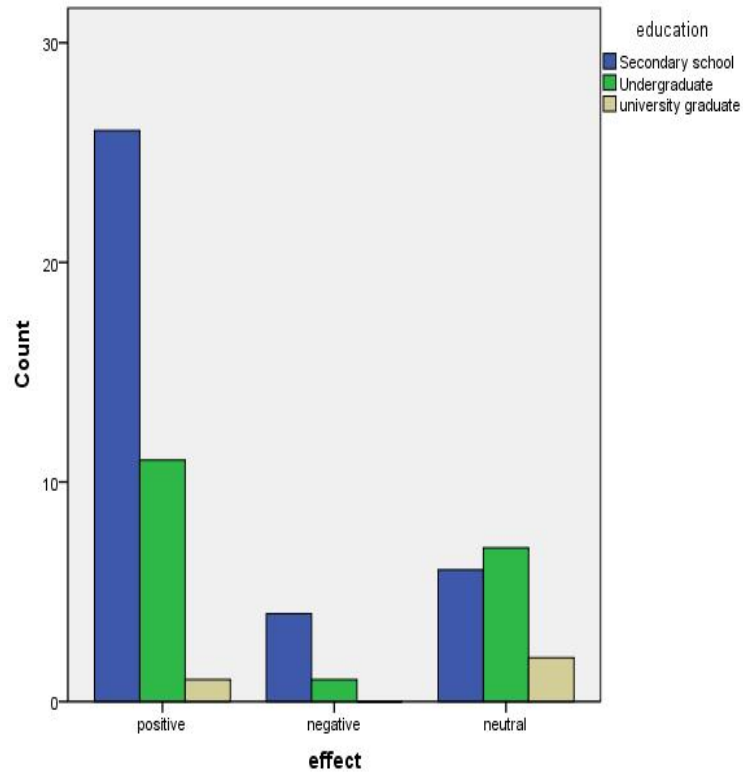


Fig. 2. Positive, negative and neutral effect of education

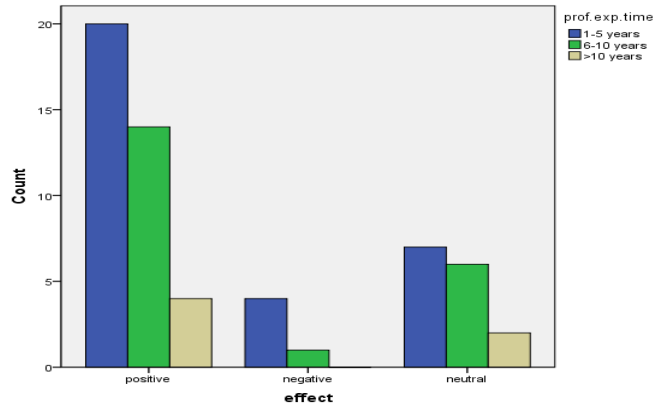


Fig. 3. Positive, negative and neutral effect of professional experience time

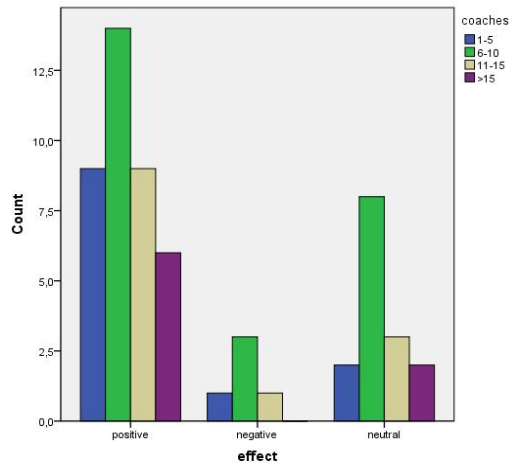


Fig. 4. Positive, negative and neutral effect of number of coaches worked with

Table 3. Findings related to the effects of midseason coaching changes on footballers

Effects of midseason coaching changes on footballers	Codes found out in consequence of Interviews	Sub-themes*
	Psychological effect of coach change	1. Motivation (+) 2. Team spirit (+) 3. Decrease of anxiety, stress and other feelings (+) 4. Increase of anxiety, stress and other feelings (-) 5. Self-distinguishing (+) 6. Gaining innovation (+) 7. Increase of desire, greed and other feelings (+) 8. Competition (+) 9. Physical performance (+) 10. Discipline (+) 11. Feeling sorrow (-) 12. Adaptation difficulty (-) 13. Lack of self-distinguishing (-) 14. Loss of stability (-)
	Effect of coach change on performance	

*(+) and (-) marks are mentioning positive and negative effects

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

As a result of the study midseason coaching changes have been observed to have created three consequences according to opinions of professional footballers. The first of them are the opinions of 38 footballers participated in the study (% 65) about positive effects on teams. Some of expressions mentioning *positive opinions* of the participants are as follows:

P15: *"Usually it creates positive effects. Since this is a blood change. Both player and non-player are obliged to prove themselves, capture a form".*

P38: *"If it has been decided to change the coach it is maybe because of bad performance of the team and poor results. That is why it can gain a new motivation. A psychology of opening a new page could make a positive contribution to the team performance."*

P40: *"It creates performance increasing effects. The player psychology in Turkish football gains a new acceleration with coach changes. A new coach is a new chance and a reason of performance increasing for a non-player."*

When examined positive opinions mentioned about midseason coaching changes; midseason coaching changes have been seen positive for the team in times of poor activities of footballers and the team specially and performance decrease. When examined the studies on midseason coaching changes, positive effects on the team performance due to midseason coaching changes have been observed [4,18,19,23]. According to [11] among the reasons to expel a coach, the most common is the occurrence of a shock-effect: A new coach would be able to motivate the players better and therefore for developing results. When assessed the studies carried out; the conclusion resulted from creation positive effects on footballers and thus the team itself due to coach changes in case of poor team activities may be reached. Besides the midseason coaching changes increase footballers' motivation as well. Footballers indicate that when they are not included in team staff or warm the bench they try to make efforts to be included in teams and thus their motivation increases and analogically the footballers having chances to be included in teams start to make more efforts to save their places in team.

Another conclusion obtained in consequence of the study is the opinion that neither positive nor negative effects have been created on footballers by midseason coach changes. Same samples for neutral expressions are as follows:

Neutral expressions;

P5: *"I don't care about any coach changes. I am not interested in state and activities of a newcomer coach, I care about my own activities in the field"*

P17: *"I don't think I'm affected much for I'm always focused on my work".*

P22: *"...there has not been any effect. It is normal if you are a footballer while this is all related to football".*

According to professional footballers opinions there is neither positive nor negative effects of midseason coaching changes on professional sportsmen. [22]. [4] have concluded in their study that midseason coaching changes create neither positive nor negative effects on teams. These sportsmen are included in the category of high level sportsmen for the group examined by the study is constituted of professional sportsmen. The high level sportsmen are mostly focused on themselves since they know how to behave in trainings and matches according to their experience and levels in sports. Accordingly they are always in tendency of showing the best performance whoever the coach there is. As a result dismissal of existing coach or appearance of a new one does not create any effect on professional sportsmen.

The last of the conclusions acquired from the study is about negative effects of midseason coaching changes on 5 (% 9) of professional footballers.

Negative expressions;

P1: *"...on my opinion stability is significant. I have not seen any successful team engaged in multiple coach changes".*

P41: *"The psychology of self-promotion again before a newcomer coach and because of it the lack of reliability ...".*

P46: *"...a newcomer coach has different tactical opinions. By this reason adaptation*

difficulty may be experienced with a new coach.”

With regard to midseason coaching changes, professional footballers consider the anxieties like feeling sorrow on existing coach leaving, having adaptation difficulty with work manner and training from of a newcomer coach, anxiety experienced due to lack of self-distinguishing before new coach and being wide of the mark, i.e. loss of stability creating negative effects on their psychologies as decrease in performance.

[24] express the opinion that in case of management changes in football teams some increase in teams points can be found out but they are of no use in team performance development at the end of the season. As stated [11] the evidence-based analysis shows that the shock effect of a turnover has a favorable effect about team performance in the short term period as well as results set out that there is not any shown effect for the coach turnover in the long term period. In other words it is mentioned that midseason coaching changes can have positive effects on sportsmen performances for a short time while no change is observed at the end of the season during league rating.

The effects of midseason coaching changes on professional footballers are necessary especially in cases of poor team performances and consequently there are positive effects on footballers' psychologies and performances. In this concept, according to this study data, midseason coaching changes opportunity in case of poor activities and performance decrease of teams has the characteristics of recommendation capable to contribute to team managements.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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