

## I Can, But I Don't! Coaches' Sportsmanship Dilemma

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### Abstract

The competitive nature of football can lead to various tensions and dramatic repercussions, presenting unique ethical challenges for all stakeholders involved. It is widely believed that a significant portion of the displayed sportsmanship or unsportsmanlike behavior and attitudes on the field falls under the responsibility of coaches. Therefore, this study aims to examine coaches' self-efficacy regarding sportsmanship through various scenarios. The research group of this study consists of 124 football coaches actively working with a group, encompassing both professional (46%) and amateur (54%) levels. The data collection instrument comprises three sections. The first section gathers demographic information, the second section includes the Coaches' Sportsmanship Self-Efficacy Scale, and the final section consists of two scenarios prepared for each subscale of the relevant scale. Results indicate that coaches' responses to sportsmanship-related scenarios do not result in significant differences in terms of sportsmanship self-efficacy. Furthermore, both coaches working at the professional level and those working at the amateur level were evaluated within their respective groups, revealing no significant differences. The results of the study demonstrate that while coaches have a firm belief in sportsmanlike behavior, they do not necessarily act in a sportsmanlike manner in situations that could potentially impact the outcome of the competition. These conflicting behaviors and attitudes of coaches, who play a prominent role in football matches passionately followed worldwide, undermine the expected values that sports should reflect in society. Consequently, it becomes evident that desired sports environments are unfortunately being conducted based on the principle that "the end justifies the means."

**Keywords:** Moral Dilemma, Self-efficacy, Sportsmanship, Football Coaches.

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## Yapabilirim Ama Yapmıyorum! Antrenörlerin Sportmenlik İkilemi

### Öz

Futbolun rekabetçi doğası birçok gerilime ve dramatik yankılanmalara sebep olabilmekte ve bütün paydaşlar bu duruma tepki verirken benzersiz ahlaki zorluklarla karşılaşabilmektedir. Bu noktada sahadan yansıyan sportmence ya da sportmenlik dışı davranış ve tutumların önemli bir bölümünün antrenörün sorumluluğunda olduğu düşünülmektedir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada antrenörlerin sportmenliğe yönelik öz-yeterlikleri ve yeterlikleri arasındaki farkların incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmanın araştırma grubunu; aktif olarak bir grupta çalışan, profesyonel (%46) ve amatör (%54) düzeyde görev yapan 124 futbol antrenörü oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmanın veri toplama aracı üç bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölümde demografik bilgiler, ikinci bölümde Antrenörlerin Sportmenlik Öz-Yeterliği Ölçeği son bölümde ise ilgili ölçeğin her bir alt boyutu için hazırlanan ikişer senaryo yer almaktadır. Araştırma bulguları, antrenörlerin sportmenlikle ilgili senaryolara verdikleri cevapların sportmenlik öz-yeterliği bağlamında anlamlı farklılığa sebep olmadığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca hem profesyonel düzeyde çalışan antrenörler hem de amatör düzeyde çalışan antrenörler kendi içlerinde değerlendirilmiş ve yine anlamlı bir farka rastlanmamıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, antrenörlerin sportmence davranmaya yönelik inançlarının yüksek olduğunu ancak müsabakanın sonucunu etkileyebilecek olası durumlarda sportmence davranmadıklarını göstermektedir. Dünyanın her yerinde tutku ile takip edilen futbol müsabakalarının başrollerinden biri olan antrenörlerin bu çelişkili davranış ve tutumları, sporun topluma yansımaları beklenen değerlerini baltaladığını göstermekte dolayısıyla arzu edilen spor ortamlarının maalesef hedefe giden her yol mubahtır ilkesiyle yürütüldüğü anlaşılmaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Ahlaki İkilem, Öz-yeterlik, Sportmenlik, Futbol Antrenörleri.

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## Introduction

In today's world, one of the most significant problems encountered at all levels of sports is the uncontrollable prevalence of inappropriate behavior. Scandals, doping, unfair competition, violence, and disrespect have become unavoidable and even expected norms in the world of sports. Football, considered the most prominent sport globally, vividly showcases the most distinct and concrete examples of this situation. Nowadays, football is referred to not merely as a sport but as an industry, primarily due to its economic and social power. Unfortunately, the strong relationship between football and economics provides all stakeholders with excuses for behavior that goes against both sporting ethics and general morality. As a result, antisocial behavior also influences the social climate of professional football (Constandt et al., 2019), highlighting that football now represents more than just athletic performance. Consequently, the power of football contributes to the questioning of sports ethics, thereby allowing the concepts of sport and morality to become an oxymoron.

Although researchers have questioned the potential of sports to lead to antisocial behaviors (Kavussanu and Boardley, 2009; Kavussanu et al., 2006; Sezen-Balçıklı, 2009, 2014), it has been emphasized that well-directed practices play a crucial role in social and moral development (Vidoni and Ulman, 2012). In this regard, the coach emerges as a potential leader of the process. However, the increasingly complex world of sports presents additional challenges for coaches. Nevertheless, research indicates that when coaches create a positive motivational and ethical climate and model ethical behavior, athletes show improvements in their moral behavior and attitudes (Hamilton and LaVoi, 2017, 2020). Therefore, it is believed that coaches' understanding of sportsmanship represents a significant parameter for reflecting the true spirit of sports to society.

Numerous studies highlight the importance of coaches in ethical behavior and attitudes in sports (Bolter et al., 2018; Hardman et al., 2010; Kavussanu, 2008; Spruit et al., 2016). Especially in the context of sportsmanship, The role of the coach in modeling his own behavior and instilling positive behavior in athletes through appropriate guidance contributes to the creation of desirable sports environments. This is because the coach's significant control over athletes' emotions positions them as a crucial factor in sportsmanship. The coach's attitudes and behaviors related to sportsmanship extend not only to athletes but also to all stakeholders of the game, including opponents and officials (Clifford and Feezell, 2010). Therefore, sportsmanship represents a multifaceted and comprehensive process for coaches, and self-efficacy, which is a crucial indicator of competence, is considered an important variable for assessing this understanding.

Bandura (1977b) emphasizes considering cognitive processes in understanding complex behaviors exhibited through an individual's interaction with their environment. Furthermore, he states that cognitive, social, and behavioral skills should be organized within a coherent action plan. Based on a reciprocal and intricate relationship, this process demonstrates that individuals are constantly interacting with their environment and therefore take an active position. One of the most important factors in this process's functioning is the relationship between an individual's skills and their belief in these skills (Bandura, 1977b). Building on this relationship, Bandura (1977a) defines self-efficacy as individuals' judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute action plans required to attain specific performance types.

It is stated that self-efficacy is related to individuals' judgments about what they can accomplish with the skills they possess rather than the skills themselves (Bandura, 1997). From this explanation, it is understood that self-efficacy is not a general trait but specific to particular situations. People may perceive themselves as competent in certain situations while deciding that their level of competence may be low in other situations. Therefore, self-efficacy is not a personality trait but a transient and easily influenced judgment that is the situation- and task-specific (Bandura, 2006; van der Bijl and Shortridge-Baggett, 2001). In this context, the self-efficacy of coaches can also vary depending on the task and situation.

It is possible to say that coach self-efficacy is associated with various factors such as player development, performance, interpersonal relationships, motivation, trust, game skills, and the coach's own development (Boardley, 2018; Ciairano et al., 2007; Feltz and Lirgg, 2001; Jackson and Beauchamp, 2010; Lirgg et al., 1994). Self-efficacy in sportsmanship is also among the important parameters representing the societal reflection of sports environments for coaches. This is because self-efficacy is a characteristic that mediates moral cognition and moral action (Bandura, 1991). However, it is a matter of curiosity whether the self-efficacy levels of football coaches specifically meet this expectation in the context of sportsmanship.

The competitive nature of football can lead to various tensions and dramatic repercussions, presenting unique moral challenges for all stakeholders involved. The role of sportsmanship guides this judgment process, as it sets the emotional tone for the relationship between the game and its stakeholders. However, today's football industry has become increasingly focused on winning at all costs, which raises questions about this situation. Situations that can influence the outcome of the competition sometimes tempt individuals to compromise their principles. Therefore, this study aims to examine whether the competence and self-efficacy of professional and amateur football coaches in relation to sportsmanship differ in scenarios that could impact the outcome of the match.

## Materials and Methods

This study was initiated with the approval of the ethics committee. The research was carried out on the basis of voluntary participation, and in this context, data were collected from the participants both face-to-face and electronically.

### Participants

The target population selected for the study consists of coaches working in professional and amateur leagues affiliated with the Turkish Football Federation. In this context, data were collected from 124 football coaches. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variables (N=124)	%
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	95.2
Woman	4.8
<b>Age</b>	Average= 40.03
<b>Coaching Experience</b>	Average = 9.41
<b>Group</b>	
Amateur	54
Professional	46
<b>Coaching Level</b>	
UEFA PRO Licensed Coach	2.4
UEFA A Licensed Coach	10.5
UEFA B Licensed Coach	21.8
TFF A Goalkeeper Coach	1.6
TFF B Goalkeeper Coach	5.6
TFF Technical Director	16.1
TFF A Licensed Coach	13.7
TFF B Licensed Coach	17.7
TFF Grassroots C Licensed Coach	8.9
Athletic Performance Coach	0.8
Match and Performance Analyst	0.8
<b>League Level</b>	
Super League	1.6
TFF 1.League	3.2
TFF 2. League	14.5
TFF 3. League	21.0
Regional Amateur League	13.7
Amateurs	38.7
Women's Leagues	4.0
Football Infrastructure Development Leagues	3.2
<b>Annual Earnings</b>	
100.000 TL or less	68.5
101.000 TL-400.000 TL	19.4
401.000 TL-700.000 TL	6.5
701.000 TL- 1.000.000 TL	1.6
1.000.000 TL or more	4.0

## ***Data Collection Tools***

### ***Coaches' sportsmanship self-efficacy scale (CSSES)***

The Coaches' Sportspersonship Self-Efficacy Scale (CSSES) was preferred to evaluate the participants' self-efficacy in sportsmanship. The scale consists of 4 subscales (Self-efficacy towards the opponent -  $\alpha=.80$  in this study, Self-efficacy towards the team -  $\alpha=.75$  in this study, Self-efficacy towards the game -  $\alpha=.76$  in this study, Self-efficacy towards the officials -  $\alpha=.74$  in this study) and includes 24 items attributed to these subscales. It is emphasized that the scale, rated on a 7-point Likert scale (0-Definitely cannot do, 6-Definitely can do), has valid and reliable results (Aktaş and Sezen-Balçıkınlı, 2023).

### ***Scenarios***

Within the scope of the present research, scenarios with moral dilemmas were created to compare the competency and self-efficacy of football coaches for sportsmanship. In order to make this comparison, two scenarios were written for each subscale of the scale to be used in the research. While preparing these scenarios, situations that could affect the outcome of the competition or shape the current position of the team (such as in-season standings, relegation, championship) were taken into consideration. Each scenario has been examined and approved by academics working in the fields of sports ethics and sports philosophy, stating that it contains moral dilemmas to express difficult conditions. These scenarios were presented to the participants as a situation with two categorical answers. The answers in the first category express the advantage that can be gained by unfair advantage over the current scenario. The answers in the second category express the respect of the coaches to the spirit of the game without thinking about the result of the match. Therefore, while the first category describes unsportsmanlike behavior, the answers in the second category exemplify sportsmanship.

#### ***Example Scenario (Sportsmanship towards opponent)***

You are leading 2-1 in a single-match elimination game, and the match is about to end! At the last moment of the extra time, the ball hits your player from where you are and goes to the crown. The referee decides in your favor, but you saw the ball go out of your player. If the ball passes to the opponent, he can score a goal with a final position and make a draw!

► In sports, the intelligent one wins, not the honest one! Why should I report the position that the referee did not see? We use the crown and enjoy the victory.

► Even if we lose, I report the situation to the referees. After all, we have to display the struggle that suits the spirit of the game.

## Analysis of Data

In accordance with the research objective, the dataset obtained was examined and cleaned using data exploration and cleaning methods to address any missing, erroneous, or outlier values (Rubin, 1976). During this evaluation stage, no negative issues were encountered in the dataset. As a result of this process, both visual and analytical evaluations were conducted to examine the assumptions of normality. The examination of relevant graphs and skewness-kurtosis values (-.218 and -1.303 range) indicated that the dataset aligns with a normal distribution (George and Mallery, 2016). Subsequently, an independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether there were any differences in coaches' sportsmanship self-efficacy based on the responses given to the respective scenarios.

## Results

In line with the research questions, the results regarding the means of the subscales of CSSES and the distribution of responses to the scenarios were examined, and these data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

### Descriptive Statistics

Subscales (Mean)	Amateur (n=67)	Professional (n=57)	General (n=124)
<b>Sportsmanship Self-Efficacy Towards Opponent</b>	5.03	5.15	5.08
<b>Sportsmanship Self-Efficacy Towards Team</b>	4.91	5.30	5.09
<b>Sportsmanship Self-Efficacy Towards Game</b>	4.72	5.05	4.87
<b>Sportsmanship Self-Efficacy Towards Officials</b>	4.22	4.43	4.32
<b>Scenarios (%)</b>			
<b>Scenario 1 (SSTO)</b>			
Unsportsmanlike	47.8	31.6	40.3
Sportsmanlike	52.2	68.4	59.7
<b>Scenario 2 (SSTO)</b>			
Unsportsmanlike	46.3	63.2	54.0
Sportsmanlike	53.7	36.8	46.0
<b>Scenario 3 (SSTT)</b>			
Unsportsmanlike	47.8	56.1	51.6
Sportsmanlike	52.2	43.9	48.4
<b>Scenario 4 (SSTT)</b>			
Unsportsmanlike	47.8	52.6	50.0
Sportsmanlike	52.2	47.4	50.0
<b>Scenario 5 (SSTG)</b>			
Unsportsmanlike	28.4	28.1	28.2

Sportsmanlike	71.6	71.9	71.8
<b>Scenario 6 (SSTG)</b>			
Unsportsmanlike	35.8	42.1	38,7
Sportsmanlike	64.2	57.9	61.3
<b>Scenario 7 (SSTOF)</b>			
Unsportsmanlike	43.3	38.6	41.1
Sportsmanlike	56.7	61.4	58.9
<b>Scenario 8 (SSTOF)</b>			
Unsportsmanlike	44.8	47.4	46.0
Sportsmanlike	55.2	52.6	54.0

Upon examining the results, it is observed that both groups have high mean scores; however, professional team coaches have higher mean scores than amateur team coaches in all subscales of CSSES. It is also notable that all participants have high mean scores. Within the subscales, it is understood that the dimension related to self-efficacy towards officials has the lowest mean score for both amateur coaches, professional coaches, and all participants (4.22, 4.43, 4.32, respectively). Taking a general perspective, all three groups have high mean scores. This indicates that coaches have a strong belief in their ability to organize and execute action plans related to sportsmanship. When examining the data in Table 2 within the context of scenarios, it is seen that only the feedback given to scenarios related to self-efficacy towards the game is in favor of sportsmanship. However, it is understood that participant responses to all scenarios related to the other three subscales have similar percentages.

Table 3

Independent Samples t Test Results

Subscales	Scenarios	Group	Amateur						Professional					General						
			N	$\bar{x}$	ss	t	p	Cohen's d	N	$\bar{x}$	ss	t	p	Cohen's d	N	$\bar{x}$	ss	t	p	Cohen's d
SSTO	Scenario 1	Unsportsmanlike	32	4.82	.95	-	0.74	.44	18	5.10	.69	-0.284	.778	.09	50	4.92	.87	-	.087	.31
		Sportsmanlike	35	5.22	.86	1.817			39	5.17	.86				74	5.19	.85	1.727		
	Scenario 2	Unsportsmanlike	31	4.92	.87	-	.348	.23	36	5.08	.72	-0.843	.403	.23	67	5.00	.79	-	.261	.21
		Sportsmanlike	36	5.13	.97	-0.945			21	5.27	.93				57	5.18	.95	1.128		
SSTT	Scenario 3	Unsportsmanlike	32	4.75	.84	-	.172	.34	32	5.27	.54	-0.391	.697	.10	64	5.01	.75	-	.274	.20
		Sportsmanlike	35	5.05	.93	1.381			25	5.34	.79				60	5.17	.88	1.098		
	Scenario 4	Unsportsmanlike	32	5.00	.62	-	.413	.20	30	5.11	.61	-	.025	.61	62	5.06	.62	-	.672	.07
		Sportsmanlike	35	4.82	1.08	.824			27	5.50	.66	2.307			62	5.12	.98	-0.425		
SSTG	Scenario 5	Unsportsmanlike	19	4.50	.24	-	.177	.43	16	5.11	.56	-	.652	.14	35	4.78	.51	-	.438	.16
		Sportsmanlike	48	4.80	.95	1.364			41	5.02	.75	.453			89	4.90	.87	-0.777		
	Scenario 6	Unsportsmanlike	24	4.32	.71	-	.003	.82	24	5.17	.43	-	.247	.33	48	4.75	.73	-	.170	.26
		Sportsmanlike	43	4.94	.80	3.145			33	4.95	.84	1.169			76	4.95	.81	1.381		
SSTOF	Scenario 7	Unsportsmanlike	29	4.07	.64	-	.281	.28	22	4.52	.86	-	.596	.14	51	4.26	.77	-	.616	.10
		Sportsmanlike	38	4.34	1.19	1.087			35	4.38	1.07	.533			73	4.36	1.13	-0.503		
	Scenario 8	Unsportsmanlike	30	3.98	.91	-	.079	.44	27	4.48	.86	-	.735	.09	57	4.22	.91	-	.307	.18
		Sportsmanlike	37	4.41	1.03	1.782			30	4.39	1.10	.340			67	4.40	1.05	1.026		



Table 3 data shows that the sportsmanship self-efficacy of the coaches within the scope of the scenarios examined as a categorical variable has close averages that they have generally achieved, and there is no statistical difference between the two groups. In the second scenario for sportsmanship self-efficacy for the game only for the amateur coach group ( $t(65)=-3.145$ ,  $p=0.00$  Cohen's  $d=0.82$ ) and for the professional coach group, where the team scenarios for the sportsmanship self-efficacy dimension for the team are found ( $t(55)=-2.307$ ,  $p=0.025$  Cohen's  $d=0.61$ ) a difference is observed according to sportsmanship potential. For the amateur group, the relevant scenario represents a VAR-based situation. It is understood that the current finding, which is not taken into account in matches played at amateur level in VAR, would be misleading. However, the scenario for the same subscale concerns both amateur and professional groups. Therefore, in this scenario, it is seen that the average score is close to each other and there is no significant difference as a result.

When the relevant scenario for the professional group is examined, it is understood that the coaches express the situation of ignoring the team for their own careers. In this case, it is understood that the coaches can behave sportsmanlike for the team despite their careers and that their self-efficacy levels and the current situation are parallel. However, in the other scenario created for the same subscale, it is understood that although the coaches have high self-efficacy, there is no significant difference between the two categories; that is, the coaches may act unsportsmanlike in possible situations that may affect the result. When the sportsmanship self-efficacy of both professional and amateur football coaches is examined within the scope of scenarios involving moral dilemmas, it shows that participants have close averages in all subscales, so these results do not cause a statistically significant difference. From these results, it is understood that the belief of the coaches that they can carry out their actions towards the opponent, the team, the game, or the officials in a sportsmanlike manner is at a very high level, but they can also act unsportsmanlike in possible situations to their advantage or disadvantage.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Society's coexistence ability relies on certain rules (Rawls, 2005). However, rules and laws alone are insufficient to ensure that individuals live under equal opportunities (Durkheim, 2014). The solution to this problem lies in individuals developing attitudes based on their values. Sportsmanship, in the context of sports environments, represents the manifestation of a set of values and the social and moral aspects of rules. It encompasses the sense of responsibility for all stakeholders, and for coaches, it represents a more comprehensive situation (Clifford and Feezell, 2010). This is because the coach is a reflection of the team. At this point, the coach's actions not only concern other stakeholders but also possess the power of guidance. Therefore, coaches play a

crucial role as the leading leader of the social and moral value transmission process that is expected to reflect from sports environments to societal order. In this context, the research aims to examine coaches' self-efficacy towards sportsmanship and explore the differences in competence and self-efficacy within the scenarios that may influence the match outcome or the team's current position. From the research results, it can be understood that although coaches have high self-efficacy toward sportsmanship, they are willing to choose situations that may give them an unfair advantage when it comes to the team's interests. Therefore, there is a difference between coaches' self-efficacy towards sportsmanship and their competence in this particular phenomenon, indicating that coaches' perspective on sportsmanship is shaped in terms of cost-benefit judgment.

The research results indicate that coaches have high self-efficacy towards sportsmanship in terms of subscales (mean range: 4.22-5.30). When the subscales are evaluated individually, it can be seen that coaches have lower average self-efficacy towards sportsmanship for match officials compared to other subscales. This finding suggests that coaches have a higher potential to behave unsportsmanlike towards officials compared to other stakeholders. This result is consistent with the literature (Hamilton and LaVoi, 2017, 2020; Romand and Pantaléon, 2007) and can be attributed to the trust factor. Coaches often criticize referees when their decisions are not in their favor. The frequent occurrence of such situations leads coaches to question all decisions, ultimately leading to a situation that is not in line with the nature of sportsmanship. However, officials, being the interpreters and implementers of the competition conditions, are the guardians of the spirit of the game (Clifford and Feezell, 2010). Therefore, officials have a higher probability of correctly interpreting a situation that occurs during the competition compared to coaches, athletes, and other stakeholders. Thus, respect for officials actually represents respect for the spirit of the game. Additionally, if coaches and athletes expected the same standards of excellence from officials for themselves, they would have to leave the field (Clifford and Feezell, 2010). An unforgiving view towards human error irrationally raises questions about coaches' or other stakeholders' understanding of the game. In this context, firmly adhering to sportsmanship, which is the emotional tone of the game, is considered to be a sufficient understanding to prevent "*The war of all against all*" as described by Thomas Hobbes.

The research results indicate that despite coaches having high self-efficacy levels towards sportsmanship, their responses to the scenarios created for each subscale tend to be closer to unsportsmanlike behavior. This suggests that coaches' understanding of sportsmanship can vary depending on the situation, and they may behave in a manner contrary to sportsmanship in order to turn a situation against them in their favor. The discrepancy between declaring high self-efficacy and behaving differently when faced with a situation indicates a paradox and Bandura (1977a)

states that this contradiction is an unhealthy state for the individual. The reasons that lead coaches to this contradiction can be personal interests or expectations. Perceptions such as cheating being part of the game, competition and rule judgments, and the importance of violence for concentration change coaches' perspectives on unsportsmanlike behavior and attitudes, thus legitimizing this undesirable situation. Higham et al. (2021) expressed difficulty in defining the concept of ethics in their qualitative research. Based on this and similar findings (Hamilton and LaVoi, 2020), it can be understood that coaches do not associate the concept of ethics with evaluating on-field incidents as ordinary. This situation is explained by coaches' inability to define the concept of ethics, leading them to rely on past experiences and questioning without critically evaluating their experiences as football players, which can result in behaving unsportsmanlike (Higham et al., 2021).

Paradoxically, athletes are often expected to perform at adult levels before they have fully matured as adults (Naylor, 2007). An athlete may have the physical abilities to compete at certain levels, but they may not be cognitively ready. Balancing these developmental conflicts is the responsibility of the coach. Therefore, the coach needs to understand what components, beyond performance in competition, are involved in embodying the spirit of the sport. The team is, in fact, a reflection of the coach. The lack of sufficient knowledge and experience regarding sportsmanship not only affects the athlete but also has an impact on the athletes the coach will train. Sportsmanship cannot merely remain an ideal; it needs to go beyond imagination. However, the opposite can also be true. A coach who instills sportsmanship and fair play in their athletes, reflecting the true spirit of the sport, can contribute to the ideals of future generations. When a coach perceives an athlete's unsportsmanlike behavior as just a part of the game or, even worse, as a necessary part of the game, it represents a contradiction to the expected and desired values of sports. Unfortunately, in performance-driven climates where winning is prioritized, the belief that anything is permissible can perpetuate such examples.

The current findings of the study and similar results in the literature demonstrate that coaches have a discourse on sportsmanship, but it can be shaped according to their own interests. In fact, according to coaches, behaving in a sportsmanlike manner in certain situations can truly contradict the nature of the sport (Hamilton and LaVoi, 2017, 2020; Higham et al., 2021; Romand and Pantaléon, 2007). In a scenario where winning becomes the primary focus, it does not allow for questioning whether one played aesthetically, adhered to their values, or played in line with their philosophy. However, being declared the winner within the rules does not necessarily signify personal achievement or true victory. At this point, it can be considered a form of moral detachment for coaches to choose a language that conceals their actions, given that the rules of the game are sometimes open to interpretation (Boardley and Kavussanu, 2007). As Bandura (1991) argues, in

determining the acceptability of behavior, the consequences of actions are more important than individuals' intentions. Although this may be acceptable for coaches, it pushes the sport, which is one of the building blocks of social order, away from its essence and transforms it into a structure that prioritizes values over creating the expected outcomes.

The results of this study, which examined the self-efficacy of amateur and professional football coaches regarding sportsmanship, indicate that the relevant group has high self-efficacy. However, despite coaches expressing their belief in being able to behave sportsmanlike in possible situations, it is understood that sportsmanship is sidelined and justified when it comes to the outcome of the competition or the position of their teams. Although self-efficacy is a strong parameter in predicting action and its outcomes, the uncertainty and ambiguity of modern football, particularly in the context of the spirit and ethics of sport, can differentiate this situation. The relationship between football, economics, and politics that attract countries on the international stage leads individuals to stretch their values to justify their moral behavior. This situation reveals that football, which mesmerizes millions, actually holds the torch of moral decay. Indeed, this understanding embodies the concrete evidence of Thomas Hobbes' assertion centuries ago that "*Private appetite is the measure of good and evil*" in today's world.

### **Ethics Committee Permission Information**

Ethics review board: Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee

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### **Authors' contributions**

Both authors contributed equally at all stages of the research.

### **Conflicts of interest**

The authors do not have a statement of conflict regarding the research.

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