Introduction

Players who enjoy playing soccer are autonomously and passionately involved in the game. Many of the world’s best soccer players, for example, Diego Maradona and Cristiano Ronaldo, anecdotally refer to the joy and pleasures they attained from the sport (1). This sense of joy and pleasure could be linked with the self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan (2, 3). This theory is based on the three basic needs of human beings: autonomy (i.e. the need to have control over one’s actions), relatedness (i.e. the need to feel connected with other people) and competence (i.e. the need to have a positive effect on outcomes and surroundings) (1, 4).

Jordet (1) concluded that there is indirect evidence of self-determined involvement in the game that has been cultivated as the foundation within the players who make it into the professional ranks in soccer. Self-determined behaviour that is driven from being
negative relationship between the flow state and OP). Furthermore, Vallerand’s passion model is also connected to intrinsic-extrinsic motivation (positively correlated with both HP and OP), amotivation (negative correlation with OP but positive correlation with HP), task and ego orientation (OP positively associated with both task orientation and ego orientation) and sports experience (less experienced athletes of 1 to 10 years, have a higher passion for sports activity compared to more experienced athletes over 11 years) (10). These findings revealed that passion matters not only in relation to intrapersonal outcomes (e.g. cognition, affect, psychological well-being, physical health and performance), but also for interpersonal, intergroup and societal consequences. These studies also address the importance of considering the nature of a situation to better predict the consequences of the types of passion in sports (6).

In sports, courage is frequently considered the principal virtue (11, 12). It is universally valued across cultures (13). Despite, there are increasing interest in understanding the concept of courage in sports (14), it has received little scientific attention (11). Thus, Konter and Ng (12) examined the initial development of specific multidimensional sports courage model leading to the development of the sports courage scale-31 (SCS-31) to measure courage (12). There are five subscales in courage, known as mastery (MT), determination (DT), assertiveness (AT), venturesome (VS) and sacrificial behaviour (SB).

Recently, Konter and Beckman’s (15) reviewed the importance of courage in sports and reported that courage is frequently considered a significant factor in sports performance. The researchers addressed courage from a self-regulation perspective. They indicated that courage in soccer should allow players to initiate actions and persistence in the pursuit of goals despite the risk. Thus, courage could act as a self-regulation process refers to the ability to face danger, difficulty, uncertainty, or pain and overcome the fear to maintain the chosen course of action.

Some soccer courage research using the SCS-31 approach indicated significant positive relationship in term of i) coping with stress, confidence and achievement motivation (16, 17); ii) commitment, peaking under pressure and imagery (18); iii) adventurous behaviour, perception of success, unaffectedness by negative referee decisions (19); iv) confidence...
Methods

Study Design, Sampling Method and Participants

Data collection was held in soccer training premises in Turkey. A cross-sectional study design with convenience sampling method was carried out among soccer players. The soccer players needed to have a minimum experience of one year in competitive soccer playing and were identified by their coaches. Then, the researchers approached the soccer players to be recruited in the study. The data collection was conducted between February and April 2019. All participants volunteered to participate in this study.

Measures

The soccer players responded to the validated PS (24) and SCS-31 (12), together with their demographic and player characteristics.

Demographic form

The demographic form, which includes individual’s characteristics (age, BMI, years of competitive experience and playing position), and participants’ performance (the number years of representation at the national team, performance response in adverse decisions, performance response against weaker and stronger opponents, and level of participation) were collected.

PS

The original PS consisted of two six-item subscales assessing HP and OP. The PS is in Turkish language and has been validated in the Turkey population (24). It is a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 7 (completely agree). The internal consistency coefficients were 0.83 for HP and 0.78 for OP (24).

SCS-31

Konter and Ng (12) initially developed the SCS-31 using the large sample of athletes from individual and team sports (n = 768). The SCS-31 is in Turkish language and has been validated in Turkey population (12). Exploratory factor analyses (EFA) and confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) revealed a 5-factors structure of the SCS-31 that supported factorial validity and reliability of the scale. These factors were labelled as MT, DT, AT, VS and SB. EFA and
CFA suggested a good fit: $\chi^2(429) = 584.32$, $P < 0.01$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.93, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.93, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.03, standardised root mean residual (SRMR) = 0.06. The Cronbach alpha for the subscales were: MT = 0.82, DT = 0.82, AT = 0.72, VS = 0.72 and SB = 0.61. Then, test-retest reliability of the SCS-31 also supported strong reliability, based on the responses from 75 athletes: MT = 0.77, DT = 0.73, AT = 0.67, VS = 0.74, SB = 0.62, total SCS-31 = 0.82 (12).

**Results**

**Participants’ Demographic Information**

A total of 278 male soccer players aged ranging from 13–38 years (M = 17.42) (SD = 4.36); 233 amateurs, 43 professionals and two did not state their status) with the competitive soccer experiences ranging from 1–28 years (M = 7.51) (SD = 4.23), participated in the study. Table 1 shows the descriptive characteristics of the participants in this study. The mean age of participants was 17 years old and all participants had an average of eight years of soccer experiences.

**Levels of HP and Related Variables**

Table 2 shows the differences levels of HP among different courage subscales’ groups (i.e. low, high). Soccer players with a higher level of MT, DT, AT, VS and total courage had significantly higher points of HP than soccer players with the lower level. Besides, there were significant differences between the levels of HP on experiences in soccer-playing and soccer level. Professional soccer players have significantly higher points of HP than amateur soccer players.

**Levels of OP and Related Variables**

Table 3 shows the differences levels of OP among different courage subscales’ groups (i.e. low, high). Soccer players with a higher level of AT and VS had significantly higher points of OP than soccer players with the lower level. Soccer players with experiences in soccer-playing (more than 10 years) and were professional players have significantly higher points of OP than those with less than 10 years of experiences and were amateur players, respectively. There was also a significant difference in OP among the three education levels. Interestingly, soccer players
Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of participant’s sociodemographic

| Variables                                  | M (SD)     | n (%)  |
|--------------------------------------------|------------|--------|
| Age                                        | 17.42 (4.36)| 271 (97.5) |
| Unstated                                   | 7 (2.5)    |        |
| Soccer experiences (year)                  | 7.51 (4.22)| 263 (94.6) |
| Unstated                                   | 15 (5.4)   |        |
| BMI                                        | 20.81 (2.58)| 271 (97.5) |
| Unstated                                   | 7 (2.5)    |        |
| National team participation (years)        |            |        |
| Non-selected national                      |            |        |
| Selected national                          |            |        |
| Unstated                                   |            |        |
| Level of participation                     |            |        |
| Amateur                                    |            |        |
| Professional                               |            |        |
| Unstated                                   |            |        |
| Playing position                           |            |        |
| Goalkeeper                                 |            |        |
| Full back                                  |            |        |
| Stopper                                    |            |        |
| Libero                                     |            |        |
| Centre midfield                            |            |        |
| Right-left winger                          |            |        |
| Right-left midfield                        |            |        |
| Centre forward                             |            |        |
| Unstated                                   |            |        |
| Passion                                    |            |        |
| HP                                         | 29.42 (6.18)|        |
| OP                                         | 23.73 (6.78)|        |
| Courage                                    |            |        |
| MT                                         | 20.87 (5.79)|        |
| Low                                        |            |        |
| High                                       |            |        |
| DT                                         | 33.45 (5.84)|        |
| Low                                        |            |        |
| High                                       |            |        |
| AT                                         | 24.09 (4.22)|        |
| Low                                        |            |        |
| High                                       |            |        |
| VS                                         | 13.46 (2.74)|        |
| Low                                        |            |        |
| High                                       |            |        |
| SB                                         | 12.94 (2.73)|        |
| Low                                        |            |        |
| High                                       |            |        |
| Total courage                              | 104.81 (15.98)|        |
| Low                                        |            |        |
| High                                       |            |        |
with secondary education background had higher points of OP than those with the university background.

**Performance Against Stronger Opponent**

Table 4 shows the mean comparison of total courage score between different levels of performance against the stronger opponents (better, worse and no difference). There was significantly different between the mean of MT among the three performance categories. Soccer players with a better performance against stronger opponents have significantly higher points of MT than soccer players with worse performance.

**Table 2.** HP in relation to related variables

| Variables          | M (SD)          | MD (95% CI)          | Test statistics (df) | P-value |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------|
| MT                 |                 |                      |                      |         |
| Low                | 28.44 (6.06)    | −2.82 (−3.51, −0.62) | −2.82 (276)           | 0.005   |
| High               | 30.50 (6.15)    |                      |                      |         |
| DT                 |                 | −2.76 (−4.19, −1.33) | −3.80 (276)           | < 0.001 |
| Low                | 28.15 (6.18)    |                      |                      |         |
| High               | 30.91 (5.86)    |                      |                      |         |
| AT                 |                 | −2.26 (−3.70, −0.82) | −3.08 (276)           | 0.002   |
| Low                | 28.40 (5.94)    |                      |                      |         |
| High               | 30.67 (6.26)    |                      |                      |         |
| VS                 |                 | −2.01 (−3.46, −0.57) | −2.74 (276)           | 0.007   |
| Low                | 28.49 (5.78)    |                      |                      |         |
| High               | 30.50 (6.46)    |                      |                      |         |
| SB                 |                 | −1.44 (−2.89, 0.02)  | −1.94 (276)           | 0.054   |
| Low                | 28.77 (5.92)    |                      |                      |         |
| High               | 30.21 (6.40)    |                      |                      |         |
| Total courage      |                 | −3.32 (−4.73, −1.92) | −4.65 (276)           | < 0.001 |
| Low                | 27.76 (6.02)    |                      |                      |         |
| High               | 31.08 (5.90)    |                      |                      |         |
| Experience         |                 | 2.08 (0.25, 3.93)    | 2.23 (261)            | 0.026   |
| 1–10 years         | 29.97 (5.61)    |                      |                      |         |
| > 10 years         | 27.87 (6.85)    |                      |                      |         |
| Soccer level       |                 | −3.17 (−5.16, −1.18) | −3.14 (274)           | 0.002   |
| Amateur            | 26.71 (7.24)    |                      |                      |         |
| Professional       | 29.88 (5.86)    |                      |                      |         |
| Performance after unfavourable decision |                 | −2.86 (2, 273) | 0.059   |
| Better             | 30.50 (6.55)    |                      |                      |         |
| Worse              | 29.85 (5.28)    |                      |                      |         |
| No difference      | 28.52 (6.23)    |                      |                      |         |

Notes: *t* = t-statistic from independent t-test applied; *f* = F-statistic from one-way ANOVA test applied; MD = mean difference; CI = confidence interval

**National Team Participation**

Selected national soccer players have higher points of DT, AT, VS and total courage than non-selected national soccer players, however, the mean differences are not statistically significant (Table 5).

**Discussion**

**HP**

The results indicated that soccer players with higher points of sports courage factors (MT, DT, AT, VS and total courage) had significantly higher scores of HP than soccer players with lower points of sports courage. This could be
important for the development of courage in terms of HP. The soccer player without courage could not generate the desired levels of HP and performance results. Therefore, passionate play is not sufficient for successful performance outcomes. For example, Holt and Dunn (25) studied successful youth elite players at an academy level or playing for their country’s youth national team. All the players referred to their love of the game as their primary motivation. However, in another study, players of the same age who were about to be cut from their club after being labelled unsuccessful, have the same motive and the love of the game as their core motive (26). In other words, both successful and unsuccessful players claimed that they have a similar motive. Therefore, motivation or HP without courage could not generate the desired results. For example, research indicated that characteristics that differentiate those who reach the professional level from those who do not include courage (15). Researchers also indicated some other factors could be related to HP, for example, psychological skills (27), mental toughness (28), coping (29), goal-setting, leadership, responsibility and emotional regulation (30), mastery climate (31), mindfulness (32), flow (10), coach-athlete relationship (9, 33), DT, goal commitment and strive for success, high levels of effort, invest much energy, and mobilising all possible resources to get where they want to be (1). However, the results of the present research showed that soccer courage is a major factor for

| Variables                  | M (SD)  | MD (95% CI)          | Test statistics (df) | P-value |
|----------------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|---------|
| MT                         |         | 0.53 (−1.08, 2.13)   | 0.65 (276)           | 0.520   |
| Low                        | 23.98 (7.06) |                       |                      |         |
| High                       | 23.45 (6.46) |                       |                      |         |
| DT                         |         | −1.04 (−2.65, 0.56)  | −1.28 (276)          | 0.202   |
| Low                        | 23.25 (6.78) |                       |                      |         |
| High                       | 24.29 (6.76) |                       |                      |         |
| AT                         |         | −2.15 (−3.74, −0.56) | −2.67 (276)          | 0.008   |
| Low                        | 22.75 (6.24) |                       |                      |         |
| High                       | 24.90 (7.22) |                       |                      |         |
| VS                         |         | −1.96 (−3.55, −0.37) | −2.43 (276)          | 0.016   |
| Low                        | 22.82 (6.53) |                       |                      |         |
| High                       | 24.78 (6.93) |                       |                      |         |
| SB                         |         | −1.60 (−3.20, 0.01)  | −1.97 (276)          | 0.051   |
| Low                        | 23.00 (6.38) |                       |                      |         |
| High                       | 24.60 (7.16) |                       |                      |         |
| Total courage              |         | −1.16 (−2.76, 0.44)  | −1.43 (276)          | 0.154   |
| Low                        | 23.15 (6.78) |                       |                      |         |
| High                       | 24.31 (6.75) |                       |                      |         |
| Experience                 |         | 2.71 (0.63, 4.78)    | 2.57 (261)           | 0.011   |
| 1–10 years                 | 24.50 (6.35) |                       |                      |         |
| > 10 years                 | 21.80 (7.62) |                       |                      | < 0.001 |
| Soccer level               |         | −4.32 (−6.49, −2.16) | −3.93 (274)          |         |
| Amateur                    | 20.05 (5.91) |                       |                      |         |
| Professional               | 24.38 (6.57) |                       |                      |         |
| Performanc after unfavourable decision |         | −                    | 0.149 (2, 273)       | 0.861   |
| Better                     | 23.42 (7.37) |                       |                      |         |
| Worse                      | 24.00 (6.46) |                       |                      |         |
| No difference              | 23.82 (6.01) |                       |                      |         |

Notes: t = t-statistic from independent t-test applied; f = F-statistic from one-way ANOVA test applied; MD = mean difference; CI = confidence interval
### Table 4. Results of courage and performance against stronger opponent

| Courage variables | Against stronger opponent categories | M (SD) | F-statistics (df) | P-value |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|-------------------|---------|
| MT                | Performance                          |        |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Better                             | 21.46 (5.47) | 4.90 (2, 274) | 0.008* |
|                   | 2-Worse                              | 17.31 (4.24) |                   |         |
|                   | 3-No difference                      | 20.57 (6.60) |                   |         |
| DT                | Performance                          |        |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Better                             | 33.34 (5.95) | 1.48 (2, 274) | 0.230   |
|                   | 2-Worse                              | 31.91 (4.52) |                   |         |
|                   | 3-No difference                      | 34.14 (5.58) |                   |         |
| AT                | Performance                          |        |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Better                             | 24.28 (3.92) | 1.33 (2, 274) | 0.267   |
|                   | 2-Worse                              | 22.75 (4.67) |                   |         |
|                   | 3-No difference                      | 24.25 (4.29) |                   |         |
| VS                | Performance                          |        |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Better                             | 13.50 (2.61) | 0.124 (2, 274) | 0.883   |
|                   | 2-Worse                              | 13.24 (2.58) |                   |         |
|                   | 3-No difference                      | 13.56 (2.81) |                   |         |
| SB                | Performance                          |        |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Better                             | 12.90 (2.65) | 0.256 (2, 274) | 0.774   |
|                   | 2-Worse                              | 12.83 (1.76) |                   |         |
|                   | 3-No difference                      | 13.13 (2.87) |                   |         |
| Total courage     | Performance                          |        |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Better                             | 105.48 (15.12) | 2.22 (2, 274) | 0.110   |
|                   | 2-Worse                              | 98.04 (11.93) |                   |         |
|                   | 3-No difference                      | 105.65 (17.27) |               |         |

Notes: *Bonferroni multiple pairs comparison: Better versus worse (P = 0.007), Better versus no difference (P = 0.701), Worse versus no difference (P = 0.061)

### Table 5. Results of courage and national team participation

| Variables         | Groups                        | M (SD)    | MD (95% CI)  | t-statistics (df) | P-value |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|---------|
| MT                | Performance                   |           |              |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Non-national                | 20.98 (5.84) | 0.31 (−3.46, 4.07) | 0.16 (266) | 0.873   |
|                   | 2-National                    | 20.67 (8.15) |              |                   |         |
| DT                | Performance                   |           |              |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Non-National                | 33.27 (5.97) | −3.06 (−6.81, 0.68) | −1.61 (266) | 0.108   |
|                   | 2-National                    | 36.33 (3.27) |              |                   |         |
| AT                | Performance                   |           |              |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Non-national                | 23.92 (4.26) | −2.65 (−5.34, 0.04) | −1.94 (266) | 0.053   |
|                   | 2-National                    | 26.57 (3.40) |              |                   |         |
| VS                | Performance                   |           |              |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Non-national                | 13.45 (2.77) | −0.15 (−1.91, 1.60) | −0.17 (266) | 0.863   |
|                   | 2-National                    | 13.60 (2.62) |              |                   |         |
| SB                | Performance                   |           |              |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Non-national                | 12.94 (2.67) | 0.04 (−1.70, 1.78) | 0.04 (266) | 0.968   |
|                   | 2-National                    | 12.90 (4.29) |              |                   |         |
| Total courage     | Performance                   |           |              |                   |         |
|                   | 1-Non-national                | 104.55 (16.24) | −5.53 (−15.77, 4.72) | −1.06 (266) | 0.289   |
|                   | 2-National                    | 110.08 (13.15) |              |                   |         |

Notes: t-statistic from independent t-test applied; MD = mean difference; CI = confidence interval
HP. There is not enough HP research concerning sports courage to generalise indicated results. Future research could include these variables in relation to HP. More research is needed in order to provide conclusive results.

Besides, this also seems to be the case in relation to the years of experience as a function of age, whereby soccer players who have 1–10 years of experience have significantly higher points of HP than soccer players with 10 years of experience and above. This result is supported by Kelecek (24), who stated that professional soccer players have significantly higher HP points than amateur soccer players. Perception of the reward system could influence the motivation and HP of the soccer players. As a result, performance problems could arise. Therefore, more research is needed for more conclusive results in relation to age, years of experiences and level of soccer.

Results showed that the performance of soccer players with higher HP could either be better or worse than players with no performance difference after unfavourable decisions in soccer. Therefore, performance after unfavourable decisions could be more related to other psychological factors than HP (for example, courage). In other words, having performance consistency does not mean having performance deterioration under aversive and disadvantages conditions. Factors such as, DT and goal directed behaviour (1), MT goals (5, 6), 5C traits (1.e. commitment, communication, concentration, confidence and control) (34), anxiety (35), courage (27) could be important. Besides, HP seems to be more related to the performance and accuracy of affective forecast (36) than OP (5). High intrinsic involvement in soccer seems to be linked with passionate participation (1).

Jordet (1) suggested that coaches can stimulate intrinsic, self-determined motivation and HP in their players by i) providing an autonomy-supportive environment; ii) allowing players’ motivational needs to be met in relation to autonomy, relatedness and competence; iii) taking players’ perspectives, desires, feelings and choices seriously; and iv) establishing safe and genuinely sound relationships with players by demonstrating concern for them and by being approachable and trustworthy. However, the present research gives partial support for these contentions and HP in terms of performance. Results showed that courage appears to be more related to performance than HP and OP. More research is needed for more conclusive results.

**OP**

The results indicated that soccer players with higher points of AT and VS have significantly higher scores of OP compared to soccer players with lower points of AT and VS. Therefore, similar comments could be made for OP as HP. Courage involves OP to the point, but it is a different concept from OP. However, we found not much research related to OP and soccer courage to generalise the results.

It appears that HP is slightly more correlated with soccer courage factors, including MT, DT, AT, VS, SB and total courage. It seems that VS and SB were more correlated with HP than OP. There is not enough research related to soccer courage, OP, and HP to make generalisations. The negative side of courage could be more related to OP, and the positive side of courage could be more related to HP as a self-regulatory and multidimensional concept (15). Extensive research is needed for more conclusive results.

Soccer players with ten years above of experience have significantly higher points of OP than soccer players with 10 years below. Similarly, professional soccer players had significantly higher points of OP than amateur soccer players. In addition, soccer players with secondary school education had significantly higher points of OP than soccer players with university education. All these results are similar to the HP results. Therefore, we can make the same or similar comments as indicated above with the HP.

**Sports Courage**

Soccer players with a better performance against stronger opponents have significantly higher points of MT compared to soccer players with worse performance. It appears that courage is essential to challenge against superior opponents, as shown by the results of MT. The level of soccer courage could predict performance against stronger opponents. Therefore, soccer courage education could be an essential area that sports psychologist, coaches and club managers should consider. Results indicated that selected national soccer players had generally higher points of DT, AT and total courage than non-selected national soccer players. It seems that DT and AT play major roles to be selected for the national soccer teams. To increase players DT and AT could help their soccer performance and their selection for the national teams.
Some limitations should be noted, such as self-reporting nature of the surveys during the training sessions. Thus, some athletes might over-report or under-report some results. Besides, some soccer players missed some answers, such as their age or soccer experiences. In addition, not all soccer players volunteered to participate in this study. This study was also limited to male soccer players; hence results were limited to one gender. Future study should include female soccer players to examine their sports courage and passion for sports. With that said, the present study was based on a real-world study occurring in a real-world setting.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study revealed a number of significant differences between the passion scale scores of the soccer players and the level of courage (low and high), and their various individual and performance variables. Soccer players with higher courage had generally higher points of HP and OP. The courage and passion traits of the soccer players seemed to have an essential role in indicated individual and performance variables.

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Ethics of Study

All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Human Research Ethics Committee and with the Helsinki declaration.

Conflict of Interest

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Authors’ Contributions

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Analysis and interpretation of the data: EK, YCK, GK
Drafting of the article: EK, YCK, GK
Critical revision of the article for important intellectual content: EK, YCK, GK
Final approval of the article: EK, YCK, GK
Provision of study materials: EK, YCK, GK
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