

Self-Handicapping and Self-Esteem Levels of Taekwondo Referees

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Abstract

This study investigated the self-handicapping and self-esteem levels of taekwondo referees. The population was consisted of 437 Taekwondo referees which serve as official referees in the Turkish Taekwondo Federation and the study group was consisted of 82 active referees (female=36, male=46). Data were collected by inviting the referees to take part in the study during the Turkish Taekwondo Championships held in different cities. All the necessary written permissions including the ethics approval and permission from the central referee committee were obtained. Hitit University Ethics Committee approved the study. The volunteers were asked to give written consent. Statistical analyses were held by using independent samples t test, one-way ANOVA, Tukey HSD as post-hoc and Pearson's r. The level of significance was predetermined as .05 for all statistical analyses. To collect data, self-esteem scale by Rosenberg and self-handicapping scale by Rhodewalt were used. The scales' Turkish adaptations were done by Tukuş and Akin, respectively. Statistical analyses revealed that taekwondo referees' self-handicapping scores were high and self-esteem scores were moderate. The referees' self-handicapping scores were not significantly different by any variable. A significant difference in self-esteem scores by the place of residence was observed. It is concluded that additional researches should be done to set out the reasons for the high self-handicapping scores of taekwondo referees.

Keywords: Competition, sports, self-respect

INTRODUCTION

In today's modern world, as almost every aspect of human life, sports have become more specialized and this specialization that initialized by Japanese martial arts Judo, Kendo and Karate was followed by Korea's Muay Thai, China's Wushu and Korea's Taekwondo. However, among these specialized sports, Taekwondo has become the most popular martial art in the world (3) and today it has a world federation with 209 member countries (51). Taekwondo, a very popular and well-known sport in the world, is also popular in Turkey and according to the data obtained from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Taekwondo is the sport that has

the third-largest number of (85,404 licensed) athletes following football and chess (45).

As in every sport, the main goal in Taekwondo is to win the competition by fair-play and be successful. For a fair competition, a fair referee is essential, and in Taekwondo the referee is the authority that rules the competition by following the regulations set and determines the winner of the competition (50).

As the most powerful official in the competition, the referee must be self-confident, consistent, determined, calm under pressure and fully motivated (47). Athletes, coaches, spectators, and federation officers expect the referee to be fair

and unbiased, and along with these, the referee should make decisions without errors. These high expectations increase the load in referees' shoulders.

The concept of self-handicapping can be explained as a strategy of voluntarily creating reasons for failure in order to protect self-esteem to stay away from the consequences of a potential failure, and individuals who feel a potential failure may tend to create situations that lead them to fail (12, 32). This strategy allows the person to internalize success and externalize failure (1) because the person himself/herself creates potential situations that may be the reason for his/her failure, but if (s)he is successful, (s)he will think that (s)he does not need to strive to be successful; if (s)he fails, the artificially-created reason will help him/her to reach a conclusion that the success was impossible due to the reason that can not be controlled by him/her and by doing so, (s)he will protect self-esteem in both cases (4, 10).

Self-esteem can be defined as the subjective assessment of the emotions that the individual feels (17). Self-esteem can also be expressed as all of the person's positive evaluations towards himself/herself, and high self-esteem includes the individual's view about himself/herself as valuable (2). Self-esteem that has various components is influenced by some factors such as feeling valuable, being successful, having social acceptance, and accepting himself/herself as is (38).

The concept of self-esteem is often associated with the concept of self-handicapping, but the direction of the relationship of these concepts is not clear. Some studies have found that these concepts have positive correlations (11, 16, 39), and individuals with high self-esteem has a tendency to use self-handicapping strategies (33).

Literature search revealed that the number of studies on referees' self-handicapping and self-esteem levels is limited and there is no study on Taekwondo referees' self-handicapping or self-esteem levels. As far as our knowledge, the current research is the very first one to examine the self-esteem and self-handicapping levels of Taekwondo referees. Because of its uniqueness, the current study is considered to be important for contributing to the literature. This study was designed and executed to assess active Turkish Taekwondo referees' self-handicapping and self-esteem levels.

MATERIAL & METHOD

At the time of the study, 437 referees who were registered at the Taekwondo Federation and completed their visa procedures were the population and the sample (n=82) chosen from the population had the power to represent the population (for $q=.5$; $d=.1$; $t=1.96$, calculated $n=79$) (52). Participants who were referees during Taekwondo Championships in Turkey, were invited to take part in the study.

Volunteers were asked to sign the written consent form and no volunteers were included in the study unless the consent was signed. Ethics Committee approval was obtained from Hitit University Ethics Committee (2019-135) prior to the study and written permission was obtained from Taekwondo Central Referee Committee.

Rosenberg's (41) 10-item self-esteem scale and Rhodewalt's (40) 25-item self-handicapping scale were used as data collection tools. Turkish adaptation along with the validity and reliability study for the self-esteem scale was conducted by Tukuş (44). Self-handicapping scale was adapted into Turkish by Akin (5).

Correlation coefficients between the items in the self-handicapping scale were found between .69 and .98. Exploratory factor analysis results revealed that the 25-item scale explained 32% of the total variance and the items were pooled in one dimension. It was found that factor loads of the scale ranged between .34 and .69, and item total correlation scores ranged between .30 and .63. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis suggested that the one-dimensional model fit well (RMSEA=.037, NFI=.98, CFI=.99, IFI=.99, RFI=.97, GFI=.97, AGFI=.94). Internal consistency reliability coefficient of self-handicapping scale is .90 and test-retest reliability coefficient is .94 (4). The score to be obtained from the self-handicapping scale varies between 0 and 125 and its median value is around 60 (40).

Internal consistency of the self-esteem scale was analyzed and positive, negative and total Cronbach Alpha values were found to be .875, .853, and .897, respectively (44). The lower and upper limits of the self-esteem scores are 10 and 40. High scores indicate that the self-esteem is high and low scores indicate that the person has low self-esteem (41).

Data analysis were done by using SPSS 22.0 (IBM, USA; Licensed to Hitit University) commercial software. The average and standard deviation (SD) values were shown in the text as Mean±SD.

To select appropriate statistical methods, the data were first analyzed whether the distributions of the data met the normality assumption. Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) test and Q-Q Plot graph were used to assess normality. Parametric tests were used since it was seen from the Q-Q Plot and S-W results ($p>.05$) that the data fit the normal distribution.

Differences between two independent groups were analyzed by independent samples t test and multiple group comparisons were conducted by using one-way ANOVA. Tukey HSD was used as the post-hoc test since it was observed that the variances were equal. Pearson's r was used to examine the relationship and direction between the variables. In all statistical analyses p was set at .05.

RESULTS

In this study, 82 referees who were active referees in Turkish Taekwondo Federation participated voluntarily. Forty-six of the participants were men (age:35.61±9.16 years) and 36 were women (age: 29.19±7.40 years). Table 1 depicts the descriptive statistics of the participants. More than 34% ($n=28$) of the participants were married and the others ($n=54$; 65.8%) were single.

Table 1. Frequency and percentages of the variables.

Variable		f	%*
Sex	Male	46	56.1
	Female	36	43.9
Marital status	Married	28	34.2
	Single	54	65.8
Level of education	High school	25	30.5
	Associate	16	19.5
	Bachelor's	37	45.1
	MS's or PhD	4	4.9
Profession	Official	30	36.6
	Worker	9	11.0
	Retiree	3	3.7
	Self employed	16	19.5
	Student	15	18.3
	Unemployed	9	11.0
Level of monthly income	Below 2020 TL	25	30.5
	2020-3500 TL	18	22.0
	3501-5000 TL	30	36.6
	5001-7000 TL	9	11.0
Place of residence	Town	24	29.3
	Province	31	37.8
	Metropolis	27	32.9
Level of proficiency in English	None	18	22.0
	Elementary	10	12.2
	Intermediate	35	42.7
	Upper intermediate	12	14.6
Referee category	Advanced	7	8.5
	Candidate	31	37.8
	Regional	25	30.5
	National	22	26.8
Experience (yrs)	International	4	4.9
	Less than 1	25	30.5
	1-3	14	17.1
	4-6	3	3.6
	7-9	33	40.2
	10 and over	7	8.5

* Notice that subgroup totals may differ from 100 since the calculated figures were rounded to the nearest decimal.

About 70% of the participants had bachelor's degree; 30% of the participants did not have regular income and the rate of referees who did not speak English was 22%. Only 4 (4.9%) of the referees participated in the study were international referees. The number of national referees was 22 (26.8%) and the number of regional referees was 25 (30.5%). When the years of experience was inspected, it was seen that approximately half (47.6%) of the participants had 3 years or less and the rest (52.4%) had 4 years or more experience.

Table 2. Descriptives of self-handicapping and self-esteem scale scores

	Self-esteem scale score	Self-handicapping scale score
<i>n</i>	82	82
Mean	24.96	73.82
Median	25.0	74.0
Standard deviation (<i>SD</i>)	2.91	8.58
Minimum	18.0	56.0
Maximum	32.0	89.0

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the subjects' self-esteem and self-handicapping scores. Self-esteem scores of the subjects ranged between 18 and 32 (24.96±2.91) and the median value was 25 which was very close to the average. The examination of self-handicapping scores revealed that the scores were varied between 56 and 89 (73.82±8.58) and the median value was 74.

Table 3. Analysing the scale scores by independent samples *t* test.

Scale	Category	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Self-esteem scale	Male	46	25.07	2.64	0.356	80	.72
	Female	36	24.83	3.26			
	Married	28	25.57	8.60			
	Single	54	24.65	8.64			
Self-handicapping scale	Male	46	73.24	8.78	-0.584	80	.56
	Female	36	74.44	8.39			
	Married	28	73.36	8.60			
	Single	54	74.06	8.64			

Gender and marital status variables did not significantly affect the scores received from the scales ($p>.05$) (Table 3). In Table 4, the results of the one-way ANOVA test were summarized. According to the table, it was found that the place of residence variable had a statistically significant effect on self-esteem scores ($p<.01$) but other variables did not have any significant effects. The scores obtained from the self-handicapping scale were not affected by any variable ($p>.05$).

Table 4. Multiple group comparisons by ANOVA.

		<i>df</i>	Self-esteem scale				Self-handicapping scale			
			Sum of squares	Mean square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Sum of squares	Mean square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Level of education	BG	3	5.34	1.781	0.204	.89	188.54	62.845	0.850	.47
	WG	78	681.55	8.738			5769.72	73.971		
	Total	81	686.89				5958.26			
Referee category	BG	3	37.20	12.399	1.489	.22	378.92	126.307	1.766	.16
	WG	78	649.69	8.329			5579.34	71.530		
	Total	81	686.89				5958.26			
Experience (yrs)	BG	4	33.42	8.356	0.985	.42	667.44	166.859	2.428	.05
	WG	77	653.47	8.487			5290.82	68.712		
	Total	81	686.89				5958.26			
Profession	BG	5	7.50	1.499	0.168	.97	399.61	79.921	1.093	.37
	WG	76	679.39	8.939			5558.65	73.140		
	Total	81	686.89				5958.26			
Level of monthly income	BG	3	20.82	6.939	0.813	.49	124.94	41.647	0.557	.65
	WG	78	666.07	8.539			5833.32	74.786		
	Total	81	686.89				5958.26			
Place of residence	BG	2	77.06	38.527	4.991	.01*	65.80	21.934	0.290	.83
	WG	79	609.83	7.719			5892.46	75.544		
	Total	81	686.89				5958.26			
Proficiency in English	BG	4	35.35	8.837	1.044	.39	227.34	56.834	0.764	.55
	WG	77	651.54	8.462			5730.92	74.428		
	Total	81	686.89				5958.26			

* $p<.01$; BG: between groups; WG: within groups

Tukey HSD was used as the post-hoc test to determine which pairs caused the significant difference by the place of residence on self-esteem scale scores. The results revealed that the difference was between the town and the province [F(2)=4.991; p=.01]. Self-esteem score obtained by the subjects living in the town was 26.25±2.57 while the score of the subjects living in the province was 23.87±2.47 (Table 5).

Table 5. Post-hoc test (Tukey HSD) results for the Place of Residence variable.

Place of residence		Mean±SD		Mean difference	SE	p
Town	Province	26.25±2.57	23.87±2.47	2.37903	0.75542	.01*
	Metropolis	26.25±2.57	25.07±3.25	1.17593	0.77945	.29
Province	Metropolis	23.87±2.47	25.07±3.25	-1.20311	0.73138	.23

* p<.01; SE: standard error

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the level of correlation between self-esteem and self-handicapping scores. As a result, a negative, weak but statistically significant relationship was found between the scores obtained from the scales (r=.25; p=.02) (Table 6).

Table 6. Correlation between self-esteem and self-handicapping scores.

Self-esteem score	Self-handicapping score	
	Pearson's r	-,25
p	,02*	
n	82	

* p<.05

DISCUSSION

One of the critical components of a sporting event is the decisions of the referee, who has the superior power over the competition (14). In Taekwondo, the winner is determined according to the decisions of the referee. So, the level of stress of the competition affects the performance of the referee, and if the referee feels himself/herself under intense stress, (s)he can use self-handicapping strategies to protect his/her self-esteem (39). When self-handicapping and self-esteem levels of Taekwondo referees participated in the current study were assessed, a negative and weak, but statistically significant relationship between Taekwondo referees' self-handicapping and self-esteem scores was found. As the self-esteem scores of Taekwondo referees decrease, self-handicapping points increase, vice versa.

Literature review revealed that the number of papers that studied referees' self-handicapping and self-esteem levels found to be limited. Most of the researches were carried out to deal with athletes self-handicapping (18, 19, 26, 35) and self-esteem (21, 22, 34, 36). Only four studies examining the self-handicapping levels of the referees were found but only one of them included self-esteem and that study was done by the participation of badminton referees (30). It was seen that the other studies were

conducted on football referees (27), wave surf referees (29), and curling referees (28). As far as our knowledge, the current study is the first study on Taekwondo referees' self-handicapping and self-esteem levels.

Taekwondo referees' self-handicapping mean score was calculated as 73.82±8.58 (median=74). In a study, football referees' self-handicapping scores were found to be 50.39±12.61 and the median was 51 (27). Wave surf referees' self-handicapping scores were 41.84±13.22 and the median was 38 (29). Curling referees' self-handicapping scores were found to be 46.6±11.45 and the median value was 48 (28). Badminton referees' self-handicapping scores were 45.48±13.5 and the median was 45 (30). When compared to the mean self-handicapping values from the other studies, Taekwondo referees' self-handicapping scores were relatively higher. It was thought that Taekwondo differed from the other sports by its category as being a combat sport and that may be the reason for the difference. As the athletes move very fast in combat sports and the number of the techniques performed per unit time is high when compared to the non-combat sports, the concentration and effort levels of the referees during the competition may be higher than the referees in other sports. Therefore, the referees may use self-handicapping strategies more to protect their self-esteem in case of a potential error. The median value of self-handicapping scale scores was reported

earlier to be around 60 (40). The median value of the Taekwondo referees' self-handicapping scores (median=74) was over the value reported by Rhodewalt (40). It can be said that both mean and median self-handicapping scores of Taekwondo referees are higher than the referees in other sports reported by the previous studies.

Taekwondo referees' self-handicapping and self-esteem scores were examined by gender, marital status, level of education, referee category, years of experience, profession, level of monthly income and level of proficiency in English. No statistically significant differences were observed between those groups. Self-handicapping scores did not differ by the place of residence but there was a difference in self-esteem scores. It was found that self-esteem scores of the participants who lived in towns was higher than the scores of those who lived in cities. In contrast, badminton referees' self-esteem scores were found not to be affected by the place of residence (30). It was thought that the reason of the difference found in the current research should be studied in the future researches.

Self-esteem is the person's attitude towards himself and this attitude can be realized either positively or negatively (41). In the studies self-esteem was examined, some reported that gender had no effect on self-esteem scores (15, 48) while some claimed that gender had an effect on self-esteem scores (23). The results of the current study revealed that Taekwondo referees' self-esteem scores did not differ significantly by gender. Although there is no agreement on whether gender had an effect on self-esteem scores, the reason of the difference found in the current study was that the subjects took part in different studies may have different social values.

Studies examining the relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping were found in literature but these studies were generally conducted on teachers, students and academic staff (7, 13, 15, 17, 37, 43, 49). Ferradas et al. (17), in which self-esteem and self-handicapping levels of higher education students were examined, reported that self-handicapping levels were increased as the self-esteem levels were decreased. Results of the current study revealed that there was a negative and significant relationship between Taekwondo referees' self-esteem and self-handicapping scores. These results are in line with the literature.

It was found that level of education or monthly income of the subjects did not affect self-esteem and self-handicapping scores of the Taekwondo referees. Previous studies reported that there was a positive correlation between self-esteem scores and level of education (6, 42). Self-esteem was known as the basic reaction of human beings (8) and there are two dimensions of self-esteem as self-efficacy and self-respect which have interaction with each other (9). The results obtained from the current study were not consistent with the information in the literature. It was thought that the reason may have been due to the Taekwondo referees' relatively high self-esteem scores that was caused by the referees' high self-efficacy and self-respect feelings.

The place of residence variable was found to have a statistically significant effect on the Taekwondo referees' self-esteem scores. It was observed that self-esteem scores of the subjects who lived in town were higher than their counterparts who lived in provinces. The reason to this may be that the subjects living in the provinces have a different life style and social environment than the subjects live in towns, but more research is needed to better understand this situation.

It was previously reported that perfectionist individuals had a low level of satisfaction with their performance (32) and felt higher levels of stress (31). Because perfectionist individuals have higher fear of failure (20), these individuals may have a higher tendency to use self-handicapping strategies (25). Self-handicapping levels of Taekwondo referees were found to be above the average values mentioned in the literature. In Taekwondo, which is a combat sport, athletes move so fast that scores can be obtained by applying combined technical hits and counter attacks in a very short time. These fast movements force the referees to be very careful and focused during the competition. One of the reasons that Taekwondo referees' self-handicapping scores were found to be above mean values may be caused by the inability to maintain the attention and focus required.

Erroneous decisions can be made during the fight of the athletes, or an athlete may be rewarded points by mistake. Referees who are aware of this situation may tend to use self-handicapping strategies to protect their self-esteem. On the other hand, high self-handicapping scores may also be due to Taekwondo referees having a perfectionistic personality. It is also known that people may use

self-handicapping strategies to protect self-esteem and to manipulate perceptions of individuals about themselves (24, 46). Therefore, it is concluded that further studies are needed in order to reveal the reasons of self-handicapping of Taekwondo referees.

According to the results of the current study, Taekwondo referees' self-handicapping scores were high and self-esteem scores were moderate. The self-handicapping scores of the referees differed by none of the variables measured. It was found that there was a significant difference in self-esteem scores only by place of residence.

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