

## Self-Handicapping and Self-Esteem Levels of Judokas

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### Research Article

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### Abstract

The present study was carried out to investigate self-handicapping and self-esteem levels of judokas. The categorical and demographic information of the subjects (N=149) who voluntarily participated were collected. Self-handicapping scale (SHS) adapted into Turkish by Akin (2012) and self-esteem scale (SES) adapted into Turkish by Tukas (2010) were used as online data collection tools. 149 judokas (62 male and 87 female) participated voluntarily. For statistical analysis, independent samples *t*-test, one-way ANOVA, Mann-Whitney *U*, Kruskal-Wallis *H* and Spearman's *rho* were conducted where appropriate. The level of significance was set as  $p<.05$ . As a result, statistically significant differences in the self-handicapping scores of judokas found in the gender, marital status, educational status, income, national athlete status and national athlete variables ( $p<.05$ ). There are statistically significant differences in self-esteem scores in the gender, age, educational status, marital status, national athlete status, international success status, international ranking and training duration variables ( $p<.05$ ). A moderate and negative correlation ( $p<.05$ ) was found between self-handicapping and self-esteem. In conclusion, coaches, club managers and other interested parties should consider their athletes in this context, considering that self-handicapping and self-esteem scores are important indicators in sportive performance as it is very important for long-term performance and healthy sports life. It is recommended to record and periodically follow the self-handicapping and self-esteem levels of the athletes.

**Keywords:** Failure, Esteem, Judo, Competition, Athlete

## Judokaların Kendini Sabotaj ve Benlik Saygısı Düzeyleri

### Öz

Bu çalışma judokaların kendini sabotaj ve benlik saygısı düzeylerinin incelenmesi amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılıma gönüllü olur veren deneklerin kategorik ve demografik bilgileri toplanmış; kendini sabotaj ve benlik saygısı düzeylerinin belirlenmesi amacıyla Akin (2012) tarafından Türkçeye uyarlanan Kendini Sabotaj Ölçeği (KSÖ) ve Tukas (2010) tarafından Türkçeye uyarlanan Benlik Saygısı Ölçeği (BSÖ) kullanılmıştır. Verilerin toplanması için online veri toplama yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmaya 149 judoka (62 erkek ve 87 kadın) gönüllü olarak iřtirak etmiştir. İstatistiksel analizler için uygun olan yerlerde bağımsız örneklem *t* testi, tek yönlü ANOVA, Mann-Whitney *U*, Kruskal-Wallis ve Spearman korelasyonları yapılmış, anlamlılık düzeyi  $p<0,05$  olarak kabul edilmiştir. Judokaların kendini sabotaj puanlarının cinsiyet, medeni durum, eğitim durumu gelir, milli sporcu olma durumu ve milli sporcu kategorilerine göre farklılařtığı ( $p<0,05$ ), benlik saygısı puanlarının da cinsiyet, yaş, eğitim durumu, medeni durum, milli sporcu olma durumu, uluslararası başarı durumu, uluslararası derece ve antrenman süresine göre istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir farklılık gösterdiği ( $p<0,05$ ), kendini sabotaj ile benlik saygısı arasında negatif yönde orta düzeyde bir ilişki olduğu ( $p<0,05$ ) bulunmuştur. Sonuç olarak; antrenörler, kulüp yöneticileri ve diđer ilgililerin kendini sabotaj ve benlik saygısının sportif performansın artırılmasında önemli bir faktör olduğunu düşünerek sporcularını bu bağlamda değerlendirmeleri gerekir. Bu durum ayrıca uzun süreli performansın devam ettirilmesi ve sağlıklı spor yaşantısının sağlanabilmesi açısından da oldukça önemlidir. Sporcuların benlik saygısı ve kendini sabotaj düzeylerinin hangi düzeyde olduğunun tespit ve takip edilmesi önerilmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Başarısızlık, Saygı, Judo, Yarışma, Sporcu

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## INTRODUCTION

Today, the concept of success is emphasized by various criteria and categories in both business life and sports. When human behaviors are observed, the terms success and failure are noticed as two important concepts that can be encountered both in daily life and in areas that require expertise, such as sports and competitions. Barutçu-Yıldırım and Demir (2017) stated that humans encounter some internal and/or external obstacles to achieve their goals and they also stated that external obstacles were more understandable and could be easily monitored. People face many events or situations that are evaluated as success and failure. It is possible to talk about success or failure as an anonymous phenomenon in many areas of life such as school success (academic success), sporting success (receiving medals or trophies at national or international level), success in business life (career advancement, product development, achieving high sales figures). The terms “success” and “failure” affect people’s emotional states, goals, and social relations and these terms were academically studied in a very wide range from academic self-efficacy (Barutçu-Yıldırım & Demir, 2017) to football referees (Kamuk et al., 2018). An important concept related to success and failure is self-handicapping. It was considered that self-handicapping is related to self-esteem, therefore, self-handicapping and self-esteem are often studied together. An important concept related to success and failure is self-handicapping. It was considered that self-handicapping is related to self-esteem, therefore, self-handicapping and self-esteem are often studied together (Büyükgöze & Gün, 2015; Coudevylle et al., 2008; Gözmen-Elmas & Aşçı, 2017; Kamuk et al., 2018, 2020; Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019b, 2019a; Prapavessis & Grove, 1998; Tice & Baumeister, 1990).

It is possible to consider the realization of goals as success and vice versa as failure. The situation is not very different when it comes to the fulfillment of a task. One can speak of success when the task is fulfilled and failure when it is not. In such a situation, people may exhibit different attitudes and behaviors and may try to explain the failure. The concept of "self-handicapping" is used to explain this situation. Efforts, attitudes and behaviors in case of failure constitute the basis of the theoretical studies to explain self-handicapping behaviors. Üzar-Özçetin and Hiçdurmaz (2016) expounded self-handicapping as the anxiety experienced with the thought that an individual was unable to do a job or a task. The more interesting thing is emergence of the behaviour of self-handicapping while the person has the potential and the ability to perform the task. Self-handicapping was studied in very different areas such as education (Barutçu-Yıldırım & Demir, 2017), health (Üzar-Özçetin & Hiçdurmaz, 2016), and sports sciences (Coudevylle et al., 2008; Gözmen-Elmas & Aşçı, 2017; Kamuk, 2022; Kamuk et al., 2018, 2020; Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019b, 2019a; Kuczka & Treasure, 2005), namely Judo (Finez & Sherman, 2012; Greenlees et al., 2006).

The internal and external obstacles, which may arise in various ways, may lead to an undesirable outcome of a performance or task that is intended to be performed. However, this possibility erroneously can lead to the conclusion that not every task is achievable, and every individual faced with a task may tend to create obstacles. Kearn et al., (2007) stated in their studies that individuals who were faced with performing a performance in relation to the existence of such a situation might have perceived a possible situation in the form of a negative result of the performance, that is, to fail, as a threat to their selves, and that in such a case, their individual performance will naturally fail. They have shown that the individuals may be consciously inclined to create the environment and conditions that will cause miscarriage to

appear as a result, and that they may even self-handicapping themselves by withdrawing their efforts in front of everyone.

The concept of self-handicapping (Higgins, 1990), which was first introduced to the literature by Jones and Berglas in 1978, has been defined in different forms. It can be defined as "the effort of individuals to protect their self by voluntarily producing excuses that will justify their possible future failures" (Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019a; Sniezek, 2001). The efforts of individuals to protect their own self may be handled in two ways. Cox and Guiliano (1999) categorized these types of self-handicapping as "behavioral self-handicapping" and "verbal self-handicapping" (Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019a). In case of failure, individuals try to protect their self-esteem by resorting to one of these two ways, perhaps as a strategy to demonstrate the behavior of starting again in order to achieve success in the future. In today's achievement-oriented society, the outcome of a performance situation can have powerful effects on the individual. These effects; a) can increase achievement, efficacy or predictions of efficacy, generate positive emotions such as happiness or pride, increase self-esteem and motivate continued task engagement, b) affect feelings of failure, inadequacy, and powerlessness, emotional responses such as sadness and shame, low self-esteem etc., and low self-esteem may cause a lack of enthusiasm for the task (Deppe & Harackiewicz, 1996).

Self-esteem is quite simply a positive or negative attitude towards a particular object, namely the self. Self-esteem has two different meanings; one of these meanings of high self-esteem is that the person thinks they are "very good"; in other words, he thinks he is "good enough". However, it is also possible for a person to see himself as superior to most people, but to feel inadequate in terms of some standards he has set for himself (Rosenberg, 1965: 30–31). There is also the value that a person gives by being influenced by different sources other than the value he gives to himself, in this regard, defining self-esteem poses some difficulties. Knightley and Whitelock (2007) stated that self-esteem is a complex psychological concept that is difficult to define, evaluate and research. They reported that people's concepts of value arise from two sources, making cognitive comparisons between what they want to achieve and what they have actually achieved, and social interactions and feedback from important people. In general, self-esteem refers to an individual's general perception and attitude about his/her own worth or value. It is a measure of how much the individual actually values, approves, appreciates, rewards or loves himself/hersel both internally and externally.

Successful athletes can feel good about themselves, feel proud, make cognitive comparisons with the values that the environment attributes to them in the formation and construction of self-esteem, and can easily reach conclusions with these effects. Once they have built their self-esteem, athletes may make an extra effort to maintain it, or they may tend to self-handicapping in order to maintain it. Self-esteem affects the decision-making processes, relationships, emotional health and general well-being of athletes and particular judokas. When the judokas (judo athletes) with a healthy, positive perception and attitude about themselves discover their potential, they may also provide the motivation they need to take on new challenges and responsibilities. It is also clear that low or high self-esteem will affect this motivation state.

As with self-handicapping, self-esteem can be seen as another important key to athletic success. In this respect, knowing the self-esteem scores of judokas and having information about their

current status can be useful for the trainers (relevant people) and sports psychologists. To the current knowledge, this is the first study considering the Turkish judokas' self-handicapping and self-esteem. Only one relevant paper (Greenlees et al., 2006) was found in the literature that studied the effects of self-handicapping in judokas. This study was believed to contribute in the literature by focusing on national-level athlete judokas.

In judo, as in all sports, athletes may have set a goal to be the best. These goals include winning olympic, world and European championships, as well as national ones. The national tournaments can be a steppingstone to have the chance to achieve international success. From this point of view, it can be seen that this sport indicates a difficult process, although it is not independent of many dimensions such as "training", "physiological", "motoric", "technical" and "tactical" features. Limited researches have been done in judokas. Literature research revealed that the studies on self-handicapping and self-esteem are carried out in the field of sports sciences are generally on referees, namely football referees (Kamuk et al., 2018), curling referees (Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019a), wave surfing referees (Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019b), badminton referees (Kamuk, 2019), disabled and non-disabled swimmers (Kamuk et al., 2020). Only one judo-related study was found in the literature review and that study investigated the effects of perceived mastery levels of judokas on self-handicapping (Greenlees et al., 2006).

The present study is considered to be a contributing study in the field of sports sciences in terms of revealing the self-handicapping behaviors and self-esteem levels of athletes competing in different sports branches. The study is supposed to help removing the potential obstacle in front of the athletes on the way to success.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Model**

In the present study, descriptive research was used. Descriptive research involves describing events or conditions, which the researcher does not actively manipulate. In this type of study, researchers often examine correlations in the data. A common tool of observational research is the survey. The researcher identifies the events or conditions to be described and seeks information from people or other sources by asking questions, often by using a questionnaire (Vincent & Weir, 2012).

### **Population and Sampling**

The population of this study consisted of athletes who were supposed to participate in 2020 Turkish Judo Championship and 149 judokas (62 male and 87 female) were selected by convenience sampling method (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008). Convenience sampling can be used to develop hypotheses and objectives can be for use when no other sampling method is feasible, especially in rigorous research studies (Stratton, 2021). The study was first planned to be conducted by a total population sampling, however, because of the unexpected emerge of COVID-19 pandemic the Championship was cancelled, and the entire population was not covered by the researcher. Hence, the convenience sampling method was adapted, and the participants were invited to take part in the study online. The subjects who accepted the voluntarily participation is included in the study.

## Data Collection

In the study, a personal information form consisted of 16 questions was used to obtain demographic information of the participants, self-handicapping scale (SHS) and self-esteem scale (SES) were also used. The SES, which was developed by Rosenberg (1965) and adapted into Turkish by Tukuş (2010), is a 4-point Likert type scale and consisted of 10 items. Item numbers 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9 are reverse coded. The SHS, which was developed by Jones and Rhodewalt (1982) and adapted into Turkish by Akın (2012), is a 6-point Likert type scale and consisted of 25 items. Item numbers 3, 5, 6, 10, 13, 20, 22 ve 23 are reverse coded. The items are scored 0 through 5. Items in the scale include a range of self-handicapping behaviors such as procrastination, emotional problems, poor health, insomnia, drug or medication use. The scores that can be obtained from SHS ranges between 0 and 125. High scores obtained from SHS indicate high levels of self-handicapping. Both scales are unidimensional. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the self-handicapping and self-esteem scales are 0.897 and 0.900, respectively.

**Table 1.** Median and mean values of SHS and SES in the studies conducted in Turkey in the sport sciences

Reference	SHS			SES	
	n	Median	$\bar{X} \pm S$	Median	$\bar{X} \pm S$
Football Referees: Kamuk et. al., (2018)	49	51	50.39±12.61		
Wave Surfing Referees: Kamuk & Şensoy, (2019b)	25	38	41.84±13.22		
Curling Referees: Kamuk & Şensoy, (2019a)	34	48	46.60±11.45		
Badminton Referees: Kamuk, (2019)	63	45	45.48±13.25	25	26.54±5.96
Swimmers: Kamuk et. al., (2020)	202	54	52.32±13.07	33	32.31±5.42
FSS* Students: Ünvanlı, (2021)	694	55	54.40±13.09	35	32.93±6.31
PES** Teachers: Tüzün & Kamuk (2021)	191	38	39.96±14.70	35	34.87±4.35
Judokas: Current Study	149	49	49.34±14.43	36	33.24±6.40

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The mean and median scores obtained from the literature review are presented in Table 1. In the studies where self-handicapping scale was used, the median values ranged between 38 and 55, whereas in the studies where self-esteem scale was used, the median values ranged between 25 and 36.

## Ethical Approval

The ethics committee permission required for the study was obtained from Hitit University Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number: 2020/36) and the institutional written permission was obtained from the Turkish Judo Federation. The judokas who gave their written consent for participation were included in the study.

## Data Analysis

The Shapiro-Wilk test used to test normal distribution revealed that the self-handicapping scale scores are normally distributed, while the the self-esteem scale scores are skewed. For multiple group comparisons SHS scores were analysed by using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and pairwise comparisons were conducted by using independent samples t-test. SES scores were analysed by using Kruskal-Wallis H for multiple group comparisons and Mann-Whitney U test was used for pairwise comparisons (Bonferroni correction was also applied). Spearman's rho was used to test the correlations between SHS and SES scores. The significance level for all the statistical analysis was set at  $p < .05$ . SPSS 22.0 (IBM Corp., USA; Licensed to Hitit University) software was used for the statistical analysis.

## FINDINGS

In this section, means, standard deviations and comparison statistics related to self-handicapping, and self-esteem of judokas are given.

**Table 2.** Descriptive analysis of the judokas participating in the study

		<i>n</i>	%	SHS Score ( $\bar{X} \pm S$ )	SES Score ( $\bar{X} \pm S$ )
<b>Gender</b>	Female	87	58.4	47.30±14.166	34.15±6.158
	Male	62	41.6	52.19±14.433	31.97±6.569
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Province	129	86.6	49.88±14.039	33.43±6.293
	District	20	13.4	45.80±16.729	32.00±7.108
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	137	91.9	50.08±13.983	33.11±6.163
	Married	12	8.1	40.83±17.320	34.75±8.895
<b>International Success Status</b>	No	58	38.9	51.41±13.642	31.59±6.388
	Yes	91	61.1	48.01±14.838	34.30±6.217
<b>National Success Status</b>	No	14	9.4	54.57±14.914	32.14±5.641
	Yes	135	90.6	48.79±14.330	33.36±6.484
<b>National Athlete Status</b>	Yes	118	79.2	47.96±14.110	33.80±6.271
	No	31	20.8	54.58±14.678	31.13±6.556
<b>Regular Training</b>	Yes	115	77.2	48.10±14.452	33.43±6.498
	No	34	22.8	53.50±13.774	32.62±6.115
<b>Age*</b>	15-17 Years	22	14.8	49.18±13.190	29.05±6.425
	18-20 Years	35	23.5	51.00±13.215	33.20±6.300
	Over 20 Years	92	61.7	48.74±15.231	34.26±6.082
<b>International Ranking</b>	First Three Degrees	81	54.4	48.27±13.550	34.72±5.521
	4 and Lower Degrees	8	5.4	55.63±18.996	32.50±10.043
	No Degree	60	40.3	49.93±14.952	31.35±6.543
<b>National Ranking</b>	First Three Degrees	120	80.5	48.63±14.263	33.50±6.426
	4 and Lower Degrees	9	6.0	47.22±13.479	34.00±5.000
	No Degree	20	13.4	54.55±15.432	31.35±6.753
<b>Income</b>	Below Minimum Wage	29	19.5	47.66±13.213	32.90±7.063
	Minimum Wage	25	16.8	54.12±13.321	32.60±6.801
	Above Minimum Wage	14	9.4	38.71±16.255	36.50±3.653
	No Income	81	54.4	50.30±14.117	33.00±6.342
<b>Training Duration</b>	60-90 mins	12	8.1	50.33±11.308	35.08±5.452
	120-150 mins	90	60.4	47.62±15.205	34.10±6.183
	180 mins and over	13	8.7	49.38±11.983	27.23±6.534
	Missing	34	22.8		
<b>Education Status</b>	Middle School	9	6.0	44.11±9.597	31.78±6.741
	High School	76	51.0	53.41±13.540	32.75±6.291
	Associate Degree	9	6.0	52.33±11.467	27.44±8.353
	Undergraduate Degree	46	30.9	44.63±14.768	35.22±4.770
	Master's Degree	9	6.0	41.22±16.887	34.56±8.777
<b>National athlete categories</b>	Class A National athlete	15	10.1	41.07±15.215	34.73±6.756
	Class B National athlete	24	16.1	45.42±13.204	34.58±6.093
	Class C National athlete	47	31.5	52.00±13.630	33.21±6.093
	Unspecified	32	21.5	47.16±13.726	33.63±6.613
	Non-National	31	20.8		
<b>Number of being a national athlete</b>	Less than 5	53	35.6	49.55±14.360	33.02±6.240
	Between 6-10	15	10.1	50.53±14.947	35.13±6.390
	More than 10	18	12.1	42.56±12.885	35.28±5.686
	No Nationality Category	32	21.5	47.16±13.726	33.63±6.613
	Non-National	31	20.8		
<b>Experience in sports (years)</b>	5 and less	14	9.4	51.43±13.466	29.71±5.863
	6-8	34	22.8	51.82±14.175	31.94±7.088
	9-11	46	30.9	49.57±13.356	33.83±6.392
	12-14	30	20.1	51.57±13.480	33.60±6.360
	15 and over	25	16.8	41.68±16.658	35.48±4.883
<b>Number of Training Days per Week</b>	3	9	6.0	41.44±12.511	35.56±4.096
	4	10	6.7	46.80±11.153	36.00±5.676
	5	31	20.8	51.35±13.669	30.68±7.377
	6	51	34.2	46.76±15.155	34.59±5.808
	7	10	6.7	48.30±17.783	31.40±7.260
	Missing	38	25.5		

\*Age variable was categorized by the competition categories determined by the Turkish Judo Federation (*Turkish Judo Federation, 2022*).

The data in Table 2 revealed that 58.4% of the judokas were female athletes. 86.6% of the judokas live in urban centers, 91.9% of them are single, 61.7% of their ages are in the category of seniors (20 and over age group), 51% of them have high school education level, 61.1% of them have international success, 89% of them have first three degrees (n=91 with international

success, n=81 with first three degrees). The majority of the judokas participating in the study (n=135, 90.6%) had national level success and 89% of the judokas (n=120) were also in the first three degrees. National athletes cover 79.2% of the subjects and 15 of them (10.1%) were Class A national athletes. It was found that 77.2% of them trained regularly, 60.4% of them trained between 120-150 mins per training unit, 34.2% of them trained 6 days per week, 30.9% of them had experience in sports between 9-11 year, and 54.4% of them did not earn any income from the sports performance (Table 2).

**Table 3.** Reliability coefficients of the scales

Data Collection Tools	n	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-Handicapping Scale (SHS)	149	25	.758
Self-Esteem Scale (SES)	149	10	.887

*p*<.05

It is known that the reference values of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient are generally interpreted as follows; > .9; excellent; >.8; good, >.7; acceptable, >.6; doubtful, >.5; poor, < .5; unacceptable (George & Mallery, 2021). The Cronbach's Alpha values of the scales revealed that SHS is acceptable ( $\alpha$ =.758) and SES is nearly excellent ( $\alpha$ =.887) (Table 3).

**Table 4.** Statistics related to the scores obtained from the scales

	Self-Handicapping Scale Scores	Self-Esteem Scale Scores
<b>n</b>	149	149
<b>Mean</b>	49.34	33.24
<b>Median</b>	49.00	36.00
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	14.434	6.402
<b>Lowest score</b>	18	11
<b>Highest score</b>	88	40
<b>Shapiro-Wilk Statistics</b>	.991	.884
<b>p (Shapiro-Wilk)</b>	.479*	.000

\**p*<.05

When the data related to the scales from the study group are examined, it is seen that the mean for SHS is 49.34±14.434 and for SES is 33.24±6.402 (Table 4).

SHS scores according to the independent variables designed in pairs about judokas a) Gender, b) Marital status, c) Place of residence for the longest time, d) Regular training throughout the year, e) National Athlete Status, f) National Success Status, g) The findings in terms of International Success Status are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** SHS pairwise comparisons

Variables	Categories	n	$\bar{X}$	S	t	df	p
<b>Gender</b>	Female	87	47.3	14.166	-2.060	147	.041*
	Male	62	52.19	14.433			
<b>Martial Status</b>	Single	137	50.08	13.983	2.154	147	.033*
	Married	12	40.83	17.320			
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Province	129	49.88	14.039	1.179	147	.240
	District	20	45.80	16.729			
<b>Regular Training</b>	Yes	115	48.10	14.452	-1.933	147	.055
	No	34	53.50	13.774			
<b>National Athlete Status</b>	Yes	118	47.96	14.110	-2.307	147	.022*
	No	31	54.58	14.678			
<b>National Success Status</b>	Yes	135	48.79	14.330	-1.431	147	.155
	No	14	54.57	14.914			
<b>International Success Status</b>	Yes	91	48.01	14.838	1.408	147	.161
	No	58	51.41	13.642			

\**p*<.05

SHS scores of the participants differed by the gender [ $t(147)=-2.060$ ,  $p<.05$ ]; marital status [ $t(147)=-2.154$ ,  $p<.05$ ] and being a national athlete [ $t(147)=-2,307$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. The mean SHS scores of male judokas ( $\bar{X}=52.19\pm 14.433$ ) were higher than the mean scores of female judokas ( $\bar{X}=47.3\pm 14.166$ ). The mean SHS score of the single judokas ( $\bar{X}=50.08\pm 13.983$ ) is higher than the mean of married judokas ( $\bar{X}=40.83\pm 17.320$ ). The national athletes' SHS scores ( $\bar{X}=47.96\pm 14.11$ ) are lower than non-national athletes' scores ( $\bar{X}=54.58\pm 14.678$ ). No statistical differences were observed in place of residence for the longest time, regular training throughout the year, national success status, and international success status (Table 5).

SES scores according to the independent variables designed in pairs about judokas a) Gender, b) Marital status, c) Place of residence for the longest time, d) Regular training throughout the year, e) National Athlete Status, f) National Success Status, g) The findings in terms of International Success Status are presented in Table 6.

There are statistically significant differences in the gender ( $U=2135.0$ ,  $p<.05$ ), marital status ( $U=542.0$ ,  $p<.05$ ), national athlete status ( $U=1359.5$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and international success status ( $U=1883.0$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The mean SES scores of female judokas ( $\bar{X}=34.15\pm 6.158$ ) were higher than the mean scores of male judokas ( $\bar{X}=31.97\pm 6.569$ ). The mean scores of married judokas ( $\bar{X}=34.75\pm 8.895$ ) were higher than the mean scores of single judokas ( $\bar{X}=33.11\pm 6.163$ ). The national athletes ( $\bar{X}=33.8\pm 6,271$ ) had a higher SES average than non-national athletes ( $\bar{X}=31.13\pm 6,556$ ). It was also seen that the average of judokas with international success ( $\bar{X}=34.30\pm 6.217$ ) is higher than the average of judokas without international success ( $\bar{X}=31.59\pm 6.388$ ) (Table 6).

**Table 6.** SES pairwise comparisons

Variable	Category	n	$\bar{X}$	S	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p
<b>Gender</b>	Female	87	34.15	6.158	81.46	7087	2135.0	-2.173	.030*
	Male	62	31.97	6.569	65.94	4088			
<b>Martial Status</b>	Single	137	33.11	6.163	72.96	9995	542.0	-1.961	.049*
	Married	12	34.75	8.895	98.33	1180			
<b>Place of Residence</b>	Province	129	33.43	6.293	75.97	9800.5	1164.5	-.702	.483
	District	20	32.00	7.108	68.73	1374.5			
<b>Regular Training</b>	Yes	115	33.43	6.498	77.13	8869.5	1710.5	-1.11	.267
	No	34	32.62	6.115	67.81	2305.5			
<b>National Athlete Status</b>	Yes	118	33.80	6.271	78.98	9319.5	1359.5	-2.204	.027*
	No	31	31.13	6.556	59.85	1855.5			
<b>National Success Status</b>	Yes	135	33.36	6.484	76.11	10275	795.0	-.98	.327
	No	14	32.14	5.641	64.29	900			
<b>International Success Status</b>	Yes	58	31.59	6.388	61.97	3594	1883.0	-2.955	.003*
	No	91	34.30	6.217	83.31	7581			

\* $p<.05$

There was no difference between the groups in the variables of place of residence for the longest period of time, regular training throughout the year and national success status. When the averages obtained from SES are analyzed, it is seen that the same differences in SHS were also observed in SES (Table 6).

SHS and SES scores for the independent variables with multiple groups (age, education, level of income, experience in sports, weekly training status, exercise time in each training unit, national ranking status, international ranking status, nationality category, and number of attending to competitions as a national athlete. The statistics related to these variables are

presented in Table 7 and Table 8. The results revealed that there is a difference between the scores in three independent variables and these differences are statistically significant (Table 7). The differences are between the subgroups of "education", "income" and "nationality category". Scheffe test, one of the post hoc tests, was conducted to determine the difference between the relevant subgroups.

**Table 7.** SHS multiple comparisons (ANOVA)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
<b>Age</b>	Between Groups	130.21	2	65.105	.31	.734
	Within Groups	30703.01	146	210.295		
	Total	30833.22	148			
<b>Education Status</b>	Between Groups	3197.704	4	799.426	4.165558	.003*
	Within Groups	27635.52	144	191.913		
	Total	30833.22	148			
U < HS						
<b>Income</b>	Between Groups	2308.284	3	769.428	3.911	.01*
	Within Groups	28524.94	145	196.724		
	Total	30833.22	148			
AMW < MW & BMW						
<b>Experince in sports (years)</b>	Between Groups	1888.741	4	472.185	2.349	.057
	Within Groups	28944.48	144	201.003		
	Total	30833.22	148			
<b>Number of Training Days</b>	Between Groups	822.237	4	205.559	.977	.423
	Within Groups	22306.2	106	210.436		
	Total	23128.43	110			
<b>Training Duration</b>	Between Groups	101.849	2	50.924	0.241	.787
	Within Groups	23706.9	112	211.669		
	Total	23808.75	114			
<b>National Ranking</b>	Between Groups	644.591	2	322.295	1.559	.214
	Within Groups	30188.63	146	206.771		
	Total	30833.22	148			
<b>International Ranking</b>	Between Groups	429.588	2	214.794	1.031	.359
	Within Groups	30403.63	146	208.244		
	Total	30833.22	148			
<b>National Athlete Categories</b>	Between Groups	1627.605	2	813.803	4.276	.017*
	Within Groups	15796.77	83	190.322		
	Total	17424.37	85			
A < C						
<b>How many times was it national athlete?</b>	Between Groups	751.062	2	375.531	1.869	.161
	Within Groups	16673.31	83	200.883		
	Total	17424.37	85			

\* $p < .05$ , *U*: Undergraduate, *HS*: High School; *AMW*: Above Minimum Wage, *MW*: Minimum Wage and *BMW*: Below Minimum Wage; *A*: A National athlete, *C*: C National athlete

The mean SHS scores of judokas with high school education ( $\bar{X}=53.41\pm 13.54$ ) are higher than the mean scores of judokas with undergraduate education ( $\bar{X}=44.63\pm 14.768$ ), and judokas with high school education tend to self-handicapping more than judokas with undergraduate education. It was seen that judokas earning income above minimum wage ( $\bar{X}=38.71\pm 16.255$ ) are lower than both the averages of those earning minimum wage ( $\bar{X}=54.12\pm 13.321$ ) and those earning income below minimum wage ( $\bar{X}=47.66\pm 13.213$ ). The self-handicapping tendencies of judokas who earn above the minimum income due to their sport are lower than the other two income groups (those earning minimum wage and those earning below the minimum wage). When the mean SHS scores of national judokas are analyzed, it is seen that the mean scores of those who stated that they are Class C national judokas ( $\bar{X}=52.13\pm 13.63$ ) are higher than the mean scores of those who stated that they are Class A national judokas ( $\bar{X}=41.07\pm 15.215$ ), Class C national judokas are more prone to self-handicapping than Class A national judokas (Table 7).

**Table 8.** SES multiple comparisons (KWU)

	Categories	n	Mean Rank	df	X <sup>2</sup>	p
Age	15-17 Years	22	47.93	2	11.466	.003* 20+ & 18-20 >15-17
	18-20 Years	35	72.83			
	Over 20	92	82.3			
Education Status	Middle School	9	67.89	4	12.567	.014* U > A
	High School	76	70.28			
	Associate degree	9	40.83			
	Undergraduate Degree	46	86.53			
	Master's Degree	9	97.22			
Income	Below Minimum Wage	29	74.12	3	4.513	.211
	Minimum Wage	25	70.02			
	Above Minimum Wage	14	97.89			
	No Income	81	72.90			
Age of Sport (time spent in sports)	5 Years and Under	14	50.14	4	9.937	.042 (p was calculated as .005 when Bonferroni correction was applied)
	6-8 Years	34	66.28			
	9-11 Years	46	78.95			
	12-14 Years	30	77.25			
	15 Years and Over	25	90.82			
Number of Training Days	3 days a week	9	63.83	4	8.368	.079
	4 days a week	10	70.20			
	5 days a Week	31	44.71			
	6 days a week	51	60.63			
	Every Day of the Week	10	46.15			
Training Duration	1-1,5 Hours	12	65.13	2	11.467	.003* 1-1.5 Hours > 3 Hours + 2-2.5 Hours > 3 Hours +
	2-2,5 Hours	90	61.26			
	3 Hours and above	13	28.85			
National Ranking	First Three Degrees	120	76.98	2	1.819	.403
	4 and Lower Degrees	9	75.39			
	No Degree	20	62.98			
International Ranking	First Three Degrees	81	84.60	2	10.249	.006* First Three > No Degree
	4 and Lower Degrees	8	80.38			
	No Degree	60	61.32			
National athlete categories	A National athlete	15	50.13	2	2.286	.319
	B National athlete	24	46.21			
	C National athlete	47	40.00			
How many times was it national athlete?	Less than 5	53	39.36	2	3.901	.142
	Between 6-10	15	51.37			
	More than 10	18	49.14			

\*  $p < .05$ ; U: Undergraduate, A: Associate degree

Kruskal-Wallis H test results shown that there were statistically significant differences in age ( $X^2(2)=11.466$ ,  $p < .01$ ), education ( $X^2(4)=12.567$ ,  $p < .05$ ), experience in sport ( $X^2(4)=9.937$ ,  $p < .05$ ), exercise time in each training unit; ( $X^2(2)=11.467$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and international ranking status; ( $X^2(2)=10.249$ ,  $p < .01$ ). No significant difference was found in the other five independent variables (income, weekly training status, national ranking status, nationality category, and number of being a national athlete) (Table 8). The results of the Mann-Whitney U (MWU) test for the variables in which there was a difference were evaluated according to the new significance levels with Bonferroni correction.

The MWU test results unveiled that there are differences between 15-17 and 18-20 age groups ( $U=229.0$ ,  $p < 0,0167$ ), between 15-17 and over 20 age groups ( $U=572.5$ ,  $p < .0167$ ). When the averages are examined, the mean self-esteem scores of 15-17 age group judokas ( $\bar{X} = 29.05 \pm 6.425$ ) are lower than both 18-20 age group judokas ( $\bar{X} = 33.20 \pm 6.300$ ) and 20+ age group judokas ( $\bar{X} = 34.26 \pm 6.082$ ). There is a difference between the self-esteem scores of those with associate's degree and those with undergraduate degree in the independent variable of

education ( $U=81.0$ ,  $p<.01$ ). When the averages were examined, it was seen that the mean self-esteem scores of those who received education at the associate degree level ( $\bar{X} =27.44\pm 8.353$ ) were lower than the mean self-esteem scores of those who received education at the undergraduate level ( $\bar{X} =35.22\pm 4.770$ ). The self-esteem scores of the judokas who received education at the undergraduate level were higher. There was a difference between those who trained for 180 mins or more and those who trained for 60-90 mins ( $U=27.5$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and between those who trained for 180 mins or more and those who trained for 120-150 mins ( $U=256.5$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The mean self-esteem scores of judokas who trained for 180 mins or more ( $\bar{X} =27.23\pm 6.534$ ) were lower than both the mean self-esteem scores of judokas who trained between 60-90 mins ( $\bar{X} =35.08\pm 5.452$ ), and the mean self-esteem scores of judokas who trained between 120-150 mins ( $\bar{X} =34.10\pm 6.183$ ). There is also a difference ( $U=1661.0$ ,  $p<.01$ ) between the judokas without any international ranking and the judokas with the first 3 degrees. The mean self-esteem scores of the judokas with the first three degrees in international competitions ( $\bar{X} =34.72\pm 5.521$ ) are higher than the mean self-esteem scores of the judokas without any degree in international competitions ( $\bar{X} =31.35\pm 6.543$ ).

**Table 9.** The correlation between the mean scores of SHS and SES

		Self-Handicapping Scores
Self-Esteem Scores	$\rho$ (rho)	-.485*
	p	.000
	N	149

\* $p<.01$

There is a statistically significant negative and moderate ( $\rho=-.485$ ;  $p=.001$ ) correlation between self-esteem scores and self-handicapping scores of the judokas participating in the study (Table 9).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The literature review revealed that some studies have been conducted in the field of sports sciences on self-handicapping and self-esteem, but the number of these studies are very limited. Some of these inspected the self-handicapping and self-esteem levels of the football referees (Kamuk et al., 2018), curling referees (Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019a), wave surfing referees (Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019b), badminton referees (Kamuk, 2019), and disabled and non-disabled swimmers (Kamuk et al., 2020). In addition to these, there are also studies on sports science faculty students by Ünvanlı (2021) and physical education teachers by Tüzün and Kamuk (2021). This study is supposed to be one of the pioneering studies in which athletes and a sport branch were taken as a sample in Turkey. Gözmen-Elmas and Aşçı's (2017) study is also one of the studies in which university athletes from different branches were taken as a sample.

The results acquired from this study was thought to make important contributions to the discussion of the results related to other sports branches (and sport sciences). This study, which was conducted with a different sample group like other studies (Kamuk, 2019; Kamuk et al., 2018, 2020; Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019b, 2019a; Tüzün & Kamuk, 2021; Ünvanlı, 2021) conducted in the field of sport sciences, it could be another important contribution to the field of sport sciences.

In the present study, the SHS median value was 49 and the SES median value was 36. The SHS median value of judokas is between 38-55, while the SES median value is higher than the other studies (over 25-35). When we look at the differences that emerged as a result of the statistics at the current study, it is possible to say that important findings were reached. According to the results from the SHS analysis, it was seen that the self-handicapping tendencies of men were higher than the SHS averages of women and it was similar to the results of the study conducted by Tüzün and Kamuk (2021). It was found that there were different results related to gender in the literature. While some studies suggested no significant difference in gender (Büyükgöze & Gün, 2015; Coşgun, 2022; Kamuk, 2019; Kamuk et al., 2018, 2020; Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019a, 2019b; Tice, 1991; Ünvanlı, 2021; Yıldırım, 2020), some other studies reported that men had higher self-handicapping scores (Eblin, 2009; Hirt et al., 2003; Jones & Berglas, 1978; Kimble et al., 1998; McCrea et al., 2008; Rhodewalt & Hill, 1995). In addition to these, there are studies showing that women had higher levels of self-handicapping than men (Dietrich, 1995; Yavuzer, 2015).

According to the findings obtained from SES, there is a difference between genders in favor of female judokas. When compared with the results of some studies, no significant differences were found in badminton referees (Kamuk, 2019), in swimmers (Kamuk et al., 2020), in sports sciences faculty students (Ünvanlı, 2021) or in physical education and sports teachers (Tüzün & Kamuk, 2021).

It can be said that there is no strong evidence that the gender variable is determinant and in favor of someone in self-handicapping. In most studies on self-esteem, there is information that results in favor of men are reported and that men have higher self-esteem (Bleidorn et al., 2016; Casale, 2020). There is a significant gender difference in that males tend to report higher self-esteem than females. This gender difference emerges in adolescence and persists throughout early and middle adulthood before narrowing and perhaps even disappearing in old age (Bleidorn et al., 2016). An examination of previous research shows that the gender difference emerged after the 1970s, increased until 1995 and then decreased. The effect of culture can also be mentioned in explaining the differentiation of self-esteem according to gender (Zuckerman et al., 2016). In the present study, women's higher self-esteem may be due to differences in social and cultural structures between the genders.

Single judokas had higher self-handicapping scores than married judokas. In the previous studies no difference between married and single subjects were found (Büyükgöze & Gün, 2015; Kamuk, 2019; Kamuk et al., 2018; Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019b, 2019a; Tüzün & Kamuk, 2021). In the evaluation of the self-esteem levels of judokas, the average self-esteem scores of married judokas were higher than single judokas and only one supporting study was found in the literature having a similar result (Parlar & Gençal Yazıcı, 2017). In another study, the self-esteem scores of single badminton referees were found to be higher than married ones (Kamuk, 2019), and no difference was found to have between the self-esteem levels of married physical education and sports teachers and single physical education and sports teachers (Tüzün & Kamuk, 2021). Loneliness is an important factor explaining low self-esteem, "loneliness is feeling the need for other people and experiencing negative feelings by realizing that you are far away from people" (Copel cited in Seki & Dilmaç, 2020). Therefore, being single can be considered as a kind of loneliness, which supports self-handicapping tendency and low self-esteem. This may explain why married judokas had higher self-esteem averages. This may be

facilitated by the fact that they are in a life that is established both obligatorily and responsibly and willingly with family, spouse, children and other people. In addition, the positive linear relationship between high self-esteem and mastery-related goal orientation scores (Üzbe & Bacanlı, 2015) can be seen as an important factor in the high self-esteem of athletes who strive to become elite athletes in judo. Üzbe and Bacanlı (2015) referring to various studies, emphasized success in self-esteem as "the individual who is aware of competencies aims to gain expertise on the subject and improve his/her competence instead of aiming to be more successful than others or not to be seen as more unsuccessful while learning a subject". Since judokas also have a motivation to be successful and to put themselves in a highly competitive environment such as the Turkish National Judo Championship, this can be explained by high self-esteem and mastery.

It is seen that the self-handicapping levels of Judokas do not differ according to age categories. There is no significant relationship between age and self-handicapping tendencies (Want & Kleitman, 2006), age was not considered as a variable in studies conducted in the field of sports sciences (Kamuk, 2019; Kamuk et al., 2018, 2020; Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019a, 2019b; Tüzün & Kamuk, 2021). Ünvanlı (2021) did not directly compare age groups in his study, but made a comparison according to the grade levels of sport sciences faculty students and found that the self-handicapping levels of first grade students were higher than those of IV grade students, second grades were higher than both III and IV grades, and finally III grades were higher than IV grades. In another study, it was reported that self-esteem of physical education and sports department and coaching department students increased by age (Erşan et al., 2009). Individuals younger than 20 years old have higher self-handicapping scores than individuals older than 25 years (Yıldırım, 2020). It can be said that the changes caused by maturation and mastery with increasing age and grade level are reflected in self-handicapping scores. It can be said that older students have lower levels of self-handicapping than younger students and students in higher grades have lower levels of self-handicapping than students in lower grades.

Previous research has shown that self-esteem is high in childhood, declines in adolescence, and gradually increases in adulthood and old age in Japan. On samples ranging from elementary school students to adults in their 60s, it has shown that patterns of age differences in self-esteem are consistent between men and women. Regarding the overall evaluation of the self, men and women show a similar pattern across the lifespan (Ogihara, 2020) and self-esteem increases with age, supporting the results of previous studies (Meier et al., 2011). Self-esteem increases during early and middle childhood (4-11 years) (there are studies suggesting that children experience a loss of self-esteem between 4 and 8 years of age), self-esteem does not change significantly during early adolescence (11 to 15 years), increases rapidly in young adulthood (up to 30 years) and gradually until middle adulthood (up to 60 years), peaks between 60 and 70 years of age, and then begins to decline fairly rapidly after 90 years of age (Orth et al., 2018). In the present study, in accordance with the literature, it is seen that those who are older have higher self-esteem averages. Judokas in the 15-17 ages category have the lowest self-esteem. Judokas in the over 20 ages category have higher self-esteem than judokas in the 18-20 ages category (the difference is not significant but quantitatively higher) and finally, judoka in the over 20 ages category have higher self-esteem than both categories. Maturation and mastery, as well as local, regional, national and international success, may have been helping consolidate the formation of self-esteem.

The self-handicapping levels of those with high school education are found to have higher than those with undergraduate (4-year Bachelor's, etc.) education. Many other study results (Kamuk, 2019; Kamuk et al., 2018; Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019b, 2019a; Sertel & Tanrıöğen, 2019; Tüzün & Kamuk, 2021) are in line with the current results. In a study on firefighters; primary, secondary, associate, and undergraduate education levels do not make a difference in self-handicapping levels (Zafer, 2016). In addition, in rugby national team athletes, the mean self-handicapping scores of those with undergraduate education are higher than those with secondary education (Coşgun, 2022). It should be known that self-handicapping tendency can occur at any educational level. Individuals can resort to self-handicapping regardless of their level of education. It can be said that the individuals with higher education levels are the group have a high tendency to self-handicapping in case they fail in the championship they participate in or if they cannot achieve a degree.

Regarding self-esteem, it is seen that those who have undergraduate education level among judokas have higher self-esteem than those who have associate degree level education. Some similar studies reported that the physical education and sports teachers with postgraduate level of education have higher self-esteem than those with undergraduate education (Tüzün & Kamuk, 2021). Saygılı et al., (2015) also reported that those who study at the preparatory, undergraduate, graduate, master's, doctoral level, and doctoral students have higher levels of self-esteem than both preparatory and undergraduate students. Along with these, (Kamuk, 2019) and Coşgun (2022) reported no difference in their studies. The lower self-esteem averages of the judokas with associate degree education compared to the judokas with bachelor's degree education can be considered as a situation caused by not being able to study at the university at graduate level. Therefore, they may have defined themselves with low self-esteem. It may be explained by a sense of loser that comes from can not start undergraduate program, maybe they may be trying to increase their self-esteem with championships and getting success through judo sport.

The self-handicapping levels of judokas earning income below the minimum wage and at the minimum wage level are higher than those earning income above the minimum wage. The self-handicapping levels of sports sciences students with an income of less than 2000 TL are higher than those with an income of 4000 TL and above (Ünvanlı, 2021), those with low income have more self-handicapping tendencies than those with high income (Yıldırım, 2020). In contrast, no difference was found in football referees (Kamuk et al., 2018), in curling referees (Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019a), in wave surfing referees (Kamuk & Şensoy, 2019b), in badminton referees (Kamuk, 2019), in rugby national team athletes (Coşgun, 2022), or in firefighters (Zafer, 2016). Low income causes a difference between the means of self-handicapping and low-income level may be an important variable for individuals in the low-income group to resort to self-handicapping. Lower income group judokas may have felt less fortunate in terms of nutrition, rest, recovery after training, and support depending on income. It can be considered as a group that has a tendency to self-handicapping in cases of possible failure or when they move away from their goals. Coaches and club managers may need to be prepared for low performance due to lower income and they should be ready to make solution plans.

Income did not make a difference in the self-esteem levels of judokas as reported in similar studies (Coşgun, 2022; Kamuk, 2019; Kamuk et al., 2020; Zafer, 2016). Some other studies

suggested that higher income levels resulted in higher self-esteem levels (Erşan et al., 2009). The self-esteem of students with higher income levels is higher than that of students with lower income levels (Yıldız & Duy, 2015). Having a high income or above average income can provide judokas with more opportunities for quality training, coaches, equipment, as well as nutrition and support. Depending on these, judokas may perform better. However, in this study, self-esteem scores did not differ according to income group, and this is consistent with most of the studies. The result in favor of the high-income group in a study can be considered as a clue to be taken into consideration. In this study, income status was not household income. It was investigated whether judokas receive income from their clubs in return for their sports. Even the difference is not enough to get a significant level, it is seen that those who earn income above the minimum wage have higher self-esteem averages than the other three groups.

There are limited studies that consider place of residence as an independent variable in explaining self-handicapping and self-esteem. The self-esteem averages of badminton referees living in metropolitan areas are higher than badminton referees living in provinces and districts, while there is no difference in self-handicapping averages (Kamuk, 2019). There is no difference between the self-handicapping and self-esteem averages of swimmers living in metropolitan areas and swimmers living in cities (Kamuk et al., 2020). There is no difference between the self-handicapping and self-esteem levels between the groups (province, district, village) in the comparison made according to the places where the students of the sports sciences faculty lived for the longest time (Ünvanlı, 2021). There is no difference between self-handicapping and self-esteem averages of rugby national team athletes according to the variable of where they live (province, district, village) (Coşgun, 2022). Living in a metropolitan area can be interpreted as having access to more opportunities. Although there are some problems such as transportation problems, coping with them and not seeing them as problems may have increase the self-esteem of individuals.

In the current study, no difference in self-handicapping levels was found, while there is a difference in self-esteem levels in favor of national athletes. Kamuk et al., (2020) emphasized that there was no difference between the self-handicapping scores of national disabled swimmers and non-national disabled swimmers and non-national disabled swimmers had higher self-esteem scores than the disabled swimmers. The self-esteem levels of hearing impaired national volleyball players and national judo players are higher than those of hearing impaired non-sport individuals (Karakoç et al., 2012). In academic studies related to self-handicapping and self-esteem, being a national athlete has not been taken as an independent variable. It is thought to be a finding that can be a reference for future studies. Being a national athlete is indeed a stage that requires hard work and specialization, and it is a result in accordance with the literature that an athlete who rises to the national team level feels positive feelings about himself/herself and has high self-esteem.

Being a member of the national team may decrease the athletes tendency to self-handicapping because of living in a controlled and well-structured environment but even though the environmental factors are set at their best, the athletes may refer to self-handicapping somehow. This can be explained by maximizing the conditions necessary for performance such as national team camps, ideal working environments, psychologists, physiotherapists, and dieticians. Of course, it may not be possible to completely prevent this or protect athletes from self-handicapping at this level, and there may be uncontrollable situations such as referee

decisions, spectator pressure, power outages during the competition. Although these may seem like excuses to be used after failure, since they are known issues, they may lead to self-handicapping even before the competition too, even if they are national athletes.

The number of times the judokas were national athletes did not cause a difference either in self-handicapping or in self-esteem. Considering the difference between the self-handicapping levels of the Class C national judokas and the Class A national judokas, it is seen that the Class C national judokas have a higher self-handicapping level. In terms of self-esteem, the national athlete category does not make a difference. The following can be said about being one or more national athletes and being a national athlete. Becoming one or more national may possibly be one of the important goals that an athlete wants to achieve, and having reached this stage once may have caused there to be no difference between the self-handicapping and self-esteem scores of judokas, however, the Class C national athlete category is a lower mastery and performance indicator. Therefore, it is significant that the self-esteem of the Class A national athletes is higher, but this should not be interpreted as the Class A national athletes will not tend to self-handicapping.

National and international achievements had no significant effect on self-handicapping and self-esteem levels. It was seen that the self-esteem levels of judokas with international success were higher. There is no study that deals with national level success as a variable, but Coşgun (2022) compared rugby national team athletes who participated in international tournaments and those who did not and found that there was no difference. While there is no difference between the self-handicapping and self-esteem levels of judokas with national ranking, there is no difference between the self-handicapping levels of judokas with international ranking. In self-esteem levels, there is a difference between those who do not have a ranking in international competitions and those who obtained the first three ranking in favor of those who obtained the first three ranking. As a result of the comparison of Rugby National Team athletes grouped as "top three at the national level", "top three at the international level" and "other", it is seen that there is no difference in self-handicapping and self-esteem levels (Coşgun, 2022). It can be expected that athletes who have achieved international success such as being a national athlete and those who have achieved the first three ranking in international competitions will have higher self-esteem than the others. It may suggest that athletes who have the ability to represent and rank at the international level may tend to self-handicapping less due to the high self-esteem and self-affirmation. This situation may help spend training and competition preparation process more efficiently.

The experience in sport did not make a difference in either self-handicapping and or self-esteem levels of the judokas. Experience can be considered as an important predictor of positive self-esteem. Long practice time is required for the sport-specific technique to be established and perfected. There may be some exceptions, for athletes who learn very fast, it may be possible to reach high performance in a short time. Experience has taken its place in the literature as an important determinant in the formation of self-esteem. It is known that self-esteem reaches its highest point at the age of 60-70 and starts to decline at later ages. This information can be adapted to "time spent in sports". Late specialization sports branches such as athletics, swimming, football, basketball etc. and early specialized artistic and rhythmic gymnastics, ice skating, etc., the development period is between 14-30 years old (the lowest and highest values were taken from all sports). The age of women to start gymnastics is 6-8,

the age of specialization is 9-10, and the age of development is 14-18 (Aıkada & Hazır, 2016). Considering that (9-10) is the specialization period and (14-18) is the development period for a female gymnastics athlete who starts the sport at an appropriate age (6-8 years) and the best performance is revealed during the development period, it can be expected that the self-esteem of female gymnastics athletes will reach the highest level at the ages of 14-18 and self-handicapping tendencies will decrease in this period. The process may reverse for this branch after the age of 18. As a hypothesis, it needs to be tested and supported by scientific evidence.

There is no difference in the self-handicapping and self-esteem levels of the judokas who participated in the Turkish championship and who stated that they train regularly and those who stated that they do not training regularly. There is no difference between judokas in either self-handicapping or self-esteem levels by the number of training days per week. In the comparisons made in terms of the time allocated for daily training, there is no difference between the mean self-handicapping scores, but when we look at the self-esteem levels, the mean self-esteem scores of the judokas who spent 180 mins or more training time are lower than the group who spent 60-90 mins training time and the group who spent 120-150 mins training time.

Training is one of the most important parameters for success and performance in sport. It is unlikely for athletes to flee or avoid training, probably because athletes do not even think about it. Although weekly training frequency and whether or not to do it regularly did not make a difference in self-esteem or self-handicapping. It is an important result that self-esteem decreased as the time allocated for training units (hours) increased. The fact that those who train for 180 mins or more have lower self-esteem levels than the others or evaluate themselves in this way can be explained as follows. Training may be inefficient, boring, or overly tiring. Too much daily training time may suggest that judokas are subjected to exhausting training, which may have led to the emergence of low self-esteem scores. These can be interpreted as problems related to training planning. Low self-esteem can be increased by customizing the training times according to the athletes in accordance with scientific studies. In addition, the need to investigate the existence of different causes should also be taken into consideration.

In the current study, a moderate and negative correlation has been found between self-esteem and self-handicapping scores of the judokas. In some other studies inspecting the similar correlation Gzmen-Elmas & Aşı, (2017), Kamuk, (2019), and Tzn and Kamuk (2021) found weak and negative correlations, nvanlı, (2021) found a moderate and negative correlation, Kamuk et. al. (2020) found a moderate and positive relationship in swimmers with disabilities and a weak negative relationship in swimmers without disabilities. Self-esteem, success goals and fear of failure predict self-handicapping tendency in athletes (Gzmen Elmas & Aşı, 2017). The presence of this negative relationship between self-handicapping and self-esteem averages is an important result that should be taken into consideration by both athletes and coaches and sports managers. With quality training and achievable realistic goals, the tendency towards self-handicapping can be reduced and self-esteem can be increased. It can be accepted that self-handicapping is an important variable in sports. There are some suggestions in the studies about the treatment of self-handicapping. These suggestions can be taken into consideration in order to make effective decisions about athletes' tendency towards self-handicapping.

It can be said that self-handicapping is actually not a desirable behavior both in daily life and in sport. Empirical studies on various proposals to treat or eliminate this behavior are limited. There are few empirically based approaches to treating self-handicapping. However, Higgins and Berglas (1990) argue that a purely behavioral approach to treating self-handicapping is unlikely to be effective. For example, helping the self-handicapping to develop some skills (such as time management for a procrastinator) may not make a significant difference because the self-handicappers have a vested interest in holding on to self-handicapping.

In a study, it was found that when some children received feedback about failure while trying to complete a problem-solving task, they focused on their previous performance and bragged about themselves instead of focusing on success. They found that children did not try to protect themselves (self-handicapping) until they encountered negative feedback. Self-protection strategies that distract performers from the task may reduce rather than sustain intrinsic motivation (Deppe & Harackiewicz, 1996; Diener & Dweck, 1978). Another study deals with high and low self-handicappers and in that study, three situations can be mentioned when high self-handicappers and low self-handicappers explain positive things compared to negative events. First, everyone is self-serving in some way, as negative events are attributed to situational factors and positive events to themselves. Second, people with high levels of self-handicappers generally make more situational attributions than people with low levels of self-handicappers. Third, the tendency of those with a high level of self-handicappers to make situational attributions is most evident when the events to be explained are positive (Rhodewalt, 1990, p. 90). In a study conducted on judo athletes, it was reported that judo athletes with high self-handicapping tendency were more likely to attribute their failures to external factors than judo athletes with low self-handicapping tendency (Greenlees et al., 2006).

It can be said that important determinants such as under-training, inadequate work and motivation are important in self-handicapping, as well as cultural structure and socio-economic conditions are also important factors in the tendency towards self-handicapping. Coaches, club managers and other interested parties should consider self-handicapping and self-esteem as important indicators of sportive performance and evaluate their athletes in this context, which is very important for long-term performance and healthy sporting life.

Regarding the results of the study, the following recommendations can be made:

- The income status of judokas should be improved to help preventing self-handicapping attitudes. By improving the income status of judokas and athletes, their self-esteem can also be increased.
- Since all attempts to reduce self-handicapping behaviors will increase self-esteem, expert support can be obtained for judokas and athletes with high self-handicapping scores.
- For high self-esteem and low self-handicapping tendencies, special importance can be given to the educational life of judokas and therefore athletes and their education should be supported.
- Preventive measures can be taken by keeping in mind that judokas and athletes who have not yet become national or have not achieved a significant success may have high self-handicapping tendencies.

- Being successful also expresses a respect in itself. Therefore, advancing with "success goals" and "achievable goals" can increase the self-esteem of judokas.
- By decreasing the duration of training units or by reducing the time and intensity with innovations (training methods) to be added into it, the self-esteem levels of judokas and athletes may be increased.
- Age may be an important factor in the formation of self-esteem, considering that self-esteem will increase with age, attitudes and behaviors that will negatively affect the self-esteem of young judokas in the early stages may be avoided.
- Marital status; being married, having a regular family life, planned programmed life habits, roles and responsibilities may be an effective tool for sportive performance, but this is a controversial issue and should not be considered as a recommendation for marriage. Cultural and regional differences may also prevent the expected benefit. This issue can be further investigated.
- It is recommended to evaluate and regularly assess the judokas' self-handicapping and self-esteem levels.
- The results obtained from the scales can be discussed with a qualitative study, and an answer can be sought to the question of how judokas evaluate these results.

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**Authors' Contribution:** Research idea-ZD, Research Design-ZD; Sİ, Data Collection-Sİ, Statistical Analysis-ZD; Preparation of the article-ZD; Sİ.

### **Ethical Approval**

**Committee Name:** Hitit University Non-Interventional Researches Ethics Committee

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