


Comparison of Self-Efficacy, Competitive Anxiety and Psychological Toughness in Athlete and Non-Athlete Students

Sporcu ve Sporcu Olmayan Öğrencilerde Akademik Öz-Yeterlik,
Rekabet Kaygısı ve Psikolojik Gücün Karşılaştırılması

Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine the self-efficacy, competitive anxiety and psychological toughness of the students by taking into account the sportsmanship variable. The data used in the study were obtained from 200 East Azerbaijan Province İslami Azad University students (100 female athletes, 100 female non-athletes) who constituted the study group on the basis of volunteerism on the basis of convenience sampling method. In this research, which was conducted in the survey model, data were obtained through Sherer and Maddux's (1990) Self-Efficacy Scale, Kiyamarsi (1997) Psychological Toughness Scale and Martens et al.'s (1990) Competitive Anxiety Scale. In the findings, it was determined that self-efficacy and psychological power variables differed significantly as a result of the comparison of athlete and non-athlete students. In addition, according to the results of the research, it was determined that athlete students had higher levels of psychological power and self-efficacy compared to non-athlete students. It was determined that competitive anxiety levels did not differ significantly between athlete and non-athlete students.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Self-efficacy, Competitive anxiety, Psychological toughness

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı öğrencilerde sporculuk değişkeni dikkate alınarak öz-yeterlik, rekabetçi kaygı ve psikolojik dayanıklılıklarının incelenmesidir. Araştırmada kullanılan veriler, kolay ulaşılabilir örneklem yöntemi temelinde gönüllülük esasıyla çalışma grubunu oluşturan (100 sporcu kadın, 100 sporcu olmayan kadın) 200 Doğu Azerbaycan Eyaleti İslami Azad Üniversitesi öğrencisinden elde edilmiştir. Tarama modelinde yürütülen bu araştırmada veriler Sherer ve Maddux'un (1990) Öz-Yeterlik Ölçeği, Kiyamarsi (1997) Psikolojik Dayanıklılık Ölçeği ile Martens ve diğerlerinin (1990) Rekabetçi Kaygı Ölçeği aracılığıyla elde edilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgularda sporcu ve sporcu olmayan öğrenciler karşılaştırılması neticesinde öz-yeterlik ve psikolojik dayanıklılık değişkeninin anlamlı şekilde farklılaştığı saptanmıştır. Ayrıca araştırma sonuçlarına göre sporcu öğrencilerin sporcu olmayan öğrencilere kıyasla, yüksek psikolojik dayanıklılık ve öz-yeterlik düzeylerine sahip oldukları belirlenmiştir. Rekabetçi kaygı düzeylerinin ise sporcu ve sporcu olmayan öğrenciler arasında anlamlı şekilde farklılaşmadığı tespit edilmiştir.

Keywords: Öz-yeterlik, Rekabetçi kaygı, Psikolojik dayanıklılık

Introduction

The awareness of the importance of exercise is increasing day by day. In particular, it is now known to be useful in creating positive and dynamic attitudes in students, strengthening motivation to learn and study, reducing anxiety and worry, recognizing students' personalities and views, reducing depression and anxiety, coping with stress, developing high self-esteem and mental well-being (Gülşen, Yıldız, Yılmaz & Şahan, 2019). In particular, self-efficacy, which is defined as the belief that a job can be done, is a competence that can be considered in this context. Because self-efficacy belief based on individuals' behaviours is very important. In individuals with underdeveloped sense of self-efficacy, the sense of responsibility is less developed, while the sense of self-efficacy is high. Individuals who experience problems can take more responsibility for the problems (Belgi, 2016; Yıldız, 2022).

In human daily life, many situations (exams, surgery, interview, competition, etc.) may encounter. It is natural for them to feel fear and anxiety in these situations. However, this fear of Anxiety can make life difficult, and disrupt sleep patterns and daily life routines. and if it starts to overreact to situations that should be considered normal, anxiety becomes a problem. transforms (Ozgun, 2018). Anxiety is a dynamic that makes the student successful, as well as being under constant anxiety. work, which causes a decrease in performance and leads to a loss of motivation can hinder productivity and reduce success (Kennerley, 2014; Morgan, 1981; Trifoni & Shahini, 2011).

Competitive anxiety is a personality disposition, akin to test anxiety, that reflects an individual's tendency to perceive threat and experience stress in a situation that involves sports competition" (Lewthwaite & Scanlan, 1989). Athletes with higher levels of competitive anxiety experience states involving irrational fear or transient physical and psychological tension more frequently and more intensely in situations than athletes with lower levels of competitive anxiety (Amanendra, Gurmeet, & Himanshu, 2018). According to Martens (1990), anxious athletes believe that necessary cognitive resources are not available to meet the challenges posed by the environment. As a result of this imbalance between demands and cognitive resources, they will experience higher levels of stress and anxiety

Various factors can improve academic and sports performance in students. Psychological toughness is one of the personality traits that is considered a factor for improving health and is a combination of beliefs about oneself and the world that protects a person from internal and external pressures. Psychological power is a factor that guides the person in difficult situations and helps him/her to overcome threatening situations (Bahari, Biyabani, & Zandi, 2016).

The issue of psychological power was first proposed by Kobasa (1998). Using existentialist theories in personality, he defines power as a combination of beliefs about oneself and the

world, consisting of three components: commitment, control, and struggle (Kobasa, 1998). People who are strong in the control component think that life events are predictable and controllable, and they believe that they can influence what is going on around them with effort. Struggling people believe that change is one of the features of the natural routine of life and that the expectation of change is an incentive for growth rather than a threat to security (Bahari, Biyabani, & Zandi, 2016). A stubborn individual is one with three general components: A: A person's belief that they can control or influence events, and an acknowledgment that psychological stressors are changeable. B: The ability to feel deeply connected or connected to the activities a person does. A: This change, combined with the exciting challenge, is more effective for human development and accepts it as a normal aspect of life (Nathawat, Desai, & Majumdar, 2010). According to the three components mentioned, mental power, inner feelings, and how to use them in different situations can be expressed. Research in this area shows that "psychological toughness" as a psychological component plays an important role in the success and performance of athletes. Groves and Shen's (2018) study found that people with high mental strength were higher in components such as self-awareness than others, indicating that this issue is closely related to the concept of self-efficacy. An individual's high intellectual ability is also an indicator of high self-efficacy. In addition, Raglin (2001) concluded in their research that the individual's perseverance and hard work have a significant positive relationship with sports success and good psychological state and a negative relationship with psychological helplessness. According to the findings of the research, endurance and hard work structures can predict changes related to sports success and mental health in athletes.

The competitive and stressful nature of sports can present athletes with many situations. Accordingly, emotional or erroneous reactions can be given to these stressors, especially competitive anxiety, which is one of the research areas of sports psychology. Martens. (1990) defined it as a tendency to perceive competitive situations as a threatening factor. In response to competitive personal anxiety, it can be said that the competitor reacts to situations in the form of a feeling of tension. Therefore, people with a persistent level of anxiety think more under threat than those with low levels of trait anxiety, taking into account their competitive situation. Even high-anxiety professional athletes show a greater increase in physiological arousal when in an anxious state than low-anxiety athletes and are therefore more prone to performance decline (Anne et al., 2006). Most of the research results showed that competition anxiety can affect the performance of athletes, in other words, the higher the level of competition anxiety (quality and condition), the weaker the performance of the athletes during the competition (Reteguiz, 2006). In addition, Zamani and Moradi (2008) concluded in their research that individual athletes have more trait

anxiety and less self-confidence than group athletes. However, no significant difference was observed between the cognitive components of state anxiety in the two groups. It is seen that there is a positive relationship between the cognitive and physical components of state anxiety and trait anxiety.

Self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs about performance and control over effective life events (Bandura, 1999). Based on Bandura's social cognitive approach, self-efficacy goals affect decision-making, thinking pattern effort, behavior, thinking, and feeling in general. According to this theory, people tend to engage in activities in which they are confident and avoid activities they think they cannot do (Bandura, 2008).

Self-efficacy beliefs affect people's thinking, how they deal with problems, emotional health, decision-making, coping with stress and depression, and choosing and achieving goals. While the belief system plays a role in improving behavior, health, and life satisfaction, many people's problems and problems stem from these beliefs. Self-efficacy is also effective in learning and progress. Thus, students with strong self-efficacy achieve greater improvement compared to others. Various studies have been conducted on the positive effects of exercise and motor activities. Studies have shown that exercise improves mental health, strengthens valuable emotions, increases auto-medication, and reduces anxiety (Levy & Levy, 2005). The American Academy of Physical Education (1984) believes that physical relaxation has long been associated with mental health and that short-term physical activity is effective in reducing stress, and that physically ready people can adapt to psychological pressures better than sedentary people (Yousfi & Mohammadkhani, 2013). According to the findings of Dishman (2018), people who are more determined to continue their regular physical activities have higher self-efficacy and show more difficulty. In addition, the results of Madi's (2007) research showed that there is a significant and direct relationship between self-efficacy, change, and physical activity level. Self-efficacy can reduce many problems by doing sports activities.

Since people's physical and mental health guarantees the survival and self-realization of society, knowing the personality traits such as psychological toughness and self-efficacy that lead people to do or stay away from sports plays an important role in education (Maddux, 1995). On the other hand, a better understanding of personality differences and reducing the anxiety levels of student-athletes will help us to provide opportunities that are appropriate for their abilities and physical-psychological needs to make significant improvements in the performance of the athletes and to attract the attention of the students. In addition, research on competitive anxiety, psychological toughness, and academic self-efficacy provides valuable information that can be effective in education and treatment planning and prevention of mental disorders, including enhancing students' mental health (Ismkhani et al., 2008). Looking at the experimental background of the study, it was seen that the studies on anxi-

ety, psychological toughness, and self-efficacy in student-athletes were contradictory and in some cases, there was a difference between the two groups, and in some studies, no difference was observed (Bahari et al., 2016; Tamadoni, Hatami, & Hashemi Razini, 2010).

Therefore, the main question of the current research is whether there is a difference between student-athletes and non-athletes in terms of self-efficacy, competition anxiety, and mental strength. Mental health is just as important as physical health, recent research has proven that several physical disorders are associated with certain mental conditions. Studies on the comparison of competitive anxiety, psychological toughness and self-efficacy in sports have shown that sports and physical education pursue many psycho-social purposes not only as a recreational activities, but also as an educational tools; because participating in sports activities brings people spatially closer, provides many ways and opportunities to gain skills in society, and increases positivity at university (Anshel, Williams, & Williams, 2000). From this point of view, it is of special importance to carry out this research considering the importance of sports in the psychological aspects of students.

Method

Study design

In this research, descriptive survey model was used. Screening models, past or current aiming to describe a situation as it exists research approaches" (Karasar, 2009).

Research group

The data used in the study were obtained from 200 East Azerbaijan Province Islamic Azad University students (100 female athletes and 100 non-athletes) who constituted the study group by convenience sampling method. The athlete students of the study group are the students who have been training in one of the sports fields of the university for at least one year and 3 times a week. Non-athlete students are students who have not been involved in any sport activity for the last year.

The students who were found to meet the determined criteria were informed about the content and scope of the research and were asked to fill in the questionnaire form.

Data collection tools

The self-efficacy scale: The self-efficacy scale was developed by Scherer and Maddux (1990) to measure general self-efficacy. The scale consists of 23 questions. The 17 questions in the scale are related to general self-efficacy and the other 6 questions are related to self-efficacy experiences in social situations. The scoring of the scale is based on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree, and strongly disagree). Questions 1, 3, 8, 9, 13, and 15 are scored as agree

from 1 to 5, while the other questions are reverse scored. A minimum of 17 and a maximum of 87 points can be obtained from this scale.

Psychological toughness scale: The psychological resilience scale was developed by Kiyamarsi (1997). The scale consists of 27 questions. Scoring of the scale is subject to four-point evaluation (never, rarely, sometimes and often). The score range is from 0 to 81.

Competitive anxiety scale: The competitive anxiety scale was developed by Martens et al. The scale consists of 27 questions. The scale is scored between strongly agree (5 points) and strongly disagree (1 point). A higher score indicates a higher level of Competition anxiety. The validity of this questionnaire was confirmed by professors. Furthermore, the reliability of this questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81.

Statistical analysis

Unanswered questions were excluded from the analysis as the first step in the data analysis process. Afterwards, it was determined that the Cronbach Alpha coefficients of the responses within the scope of the research were at acceptable values (alpha>.60). It was determined that the data were not normal and in this direction, Mann Whitney-U test was used in the analyses.

Findings

In this section, the data obtained from the variables examined in line with the research objectives and hypotheses were examined from two perspectives; In the first part, the results of the descriptive analysis of the variables are presented, and in the second part, the results of the inferential analysis of the data are presented.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of research variables

Subdimension	Group	X	SD
Self-efficacy	Athlete	52.20	6.72
	Non-athlete	49.22	6.02
Competitive anxiety	Athlete	64.59	4.95
	Non-athlete	66.25	5.47
Psychological toughness	Athlete	44.19	3.84
	Non-athlete	41.89	3.71

Table 1 shows the mean scores of the research group obtained from self-efficacy, competition anxiety, and psychological toughness scales. So much so that the averages of self-efficacy, competition anxiety, and mental strength in student-athletes are 52.20, 64.59, and 44.19, respectively. In addition, the self-efficacy, competition anxiety, and mental strength averages of non-athletes were 49.22, 66.25, and 41.89, respectively.

Table 2. Self-efficacy rankings between two groups of student-athletes and non-athletes

Subdimension	Group	N	X	U	P
Self-efficacy	Athlete	100	114.39	3611.01	0.001
	Non-athlete	100	86.61		

The results showed that the mean self-efficacy of athletes is 114.39 and the mean self-efficacy of non-athletes is 86.61. Results from Table 2, Mann-Whitney U test shows 3611.01. The mean level of self-efficacy was lower than 0.05. In other words, the degree of self-efficacy is not equal among athletes and non-athlete students. There is a significant difference and students have a high degree of self-efficacy. Therefore, the first hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3. Rankings of competitive anxiety between the two groups of student-athletes and non-athletes

Subdimension	Group	N	X	U	P
Competitive anxiety	Athlete	100	92.76	4226.01	0.06
	Non-athlete	100	108.24		

The results of the table showed that the average competition anxiety of the athletes was equal to 92.76 and the average competition anxiety of the non-athletes was 108.24. According to the results in Table 3, the Mann-Whitney U test shows a value of 4226.01, the significance level is calculated as less than 0.05, and the null hypothesis is based on the equality of competitive anxiety levels among students. Two groups of Athletes and Non-Athletes are confirmed. In other words, the amount of competition anxiety was equal between athletes and non-athletes, and no significant difference was found between the two groups.

Table 4. Mental strength rankings between two athletic students and a non-athlete group

Subdimension	Group	N	X	U	P
Psychological toughness	Athlete	100	117.73	3277.01	0.001
	Non-athlete	100	83.27		

According to the results of the table, it is seen that the average psychological toughness of the athletes is 117.73 and the average psychological toughness of the non-athletes is 83.27. According to the results of Table 4, the Mann-Whitney U test shows a value of 3277.01, and the significance level was calculated as less than 0.05. The null assumption is that the psychological toughness level is equal between the two groups. The number of athletes and non-athletes is denied. In other words, the amount of psychological toughness between student-athletes and non-athletes is not equal and there is a significant difference, and student-athletes have high mental strength.

Discussion

Psychological power is one of the belief systems that has a fundamental role in the quality of human life and is responsible for creating a balance between its different dimensions. Stubbornness is guided by motivational and intrinsic factors and therefore has a lot of stability. The presence of this structure pushes the person into difficult situations and helps him overcome threatening events more successfully; Therefore, stubbornness is the ability to correctly understand external conditions and make positive decisions about oneself (Kobasa, 1998). By searching their environment, they try to find resources that will help reduce stress in life so that they can cope effectively and better with current access, and by relying on the flexibility of their personalities, they reduce the feeling of fear in them (Kobasa, 1998).

Many athletes perform very well in training; But they experience emotional reactions in conditions of competition and confrontation with competitors, media, spectators, and other stressful situations. Anger, fear, despair, anxiety, pride, inferiority, etc. All of the different emotions affect a person's performance and are used to express positive and negative emotional and psychological states and accompanying physical symptoms. Many researchers, coaches, sports managers, and athletes have emphasized the effect of emotions on sports performance before, during, and after the competition, and most athletes attribute their successful performance or failure to emotional factors. Sports psychology researchers have also concluded that each athlete is more skilled at understanding, identifying, and regulating the precise expression of their emotions, making them more efficient and will have a mental habit that shows their best performance. According to the explanations above, it can be concluded that the recognition and investigation of various psychological components, including emotional intelligence and psychological toughness, can contribute not only to the athletes' competition conditions but also to their success, performance, and behavior (Bahari et al., 2016). Since the current research was conducted among Azad University students, it is recommended to be conducted with students from other universities and to be researched comparatively. In future research, it is recommended that researchers select samples from other cities and compare them with the results of this research. Other research methods such as interviews and observation should be used to collect data and its findings should be compared with the results of the current study.

Schlangosky et al. (2020) found that athletes who are self-aware, adept, and motivated always find a way to succeed. Because they believe there is always a way to succeed and overcome problems.

Grove and Shen (2018) found that people with high mental toughness also rank higher in components such as self-awareness, which indicates that this is closely related to the

concept of self-efficacy and that athletes with high mental toughness also have high self-efficacy.

In a study (Jo-Ann, 2016) showed that competitive anxiety can affect the performance of athletes, in other words, the higher the level of competitive anxiety (trait and mood), the weaker the performance of athletes during competition. Another study examining the relationship between self-efficacy, personality, and sports, Anjali and Babitha (2020) concluded that self-efficacy mediates the relationships between personality and sports behavior. The results of the study also showed that there is a significant difference between the self-efficacy of athletes and non-athletes.

Vecchio et al. (2007) concluded that self-efficacy beliefs reduce one's passivity and ability to adapt to problems and motivate the individual to struggle with them. In addition, high self-efficacy beliefs lead to the best possible management of interpersonal relationships and thus predict life satisfaction. People with strong self-efficacy believe they can control life events effectively; this understanding and conviction give them a different perspective from those who are weak in terms of self-efficacy; Because this emotion has a direct effect on their behavior. Therefore, self-efficacy can be a critical factor in lifelong success and failure.

Self-efficacy is not the life experienced, but the embodiment of the life experienced by the individual over time. rather, it includes one's perspective and judgment on a situation, optimism towards different situations, hope, and resilience against problems (Shelangoski, 2013). Self-efficacy is a logical process and concept based on culture and is a summary of the values, beliefs, symbols, and experiences that that culture creates and provides a way of knowing and understanding one's circumstances and experiences in life. Therefore, self-efficacy is an important force in guiding, maintaining, and improving health, and in this way, it is well-being in different societies and cultures that increases the level of physical and mental health (Kim and Park, 2001).

Conclusion

The research results showed a significant difference in the variable of self-efficacy and psychological toughness between athletes and non-athlete students. Indeed, due to the higher self-efficacy and mental strength averages of student-athletes than non-athlete students, student-athletes have higher mental strength than non-athlete students, and there is no significant difference between the two groups in terms of competition anxiety.

There is a difference between athletes and non-athletes in terms of self-efficacy. The study's findings showed a significant difference in the self-efficacy variable between student-athletes and non-athletes. Athletes appear to have higher self-efficacy than non-athletes, due to the higher average self-efficacy among non-athletes compared to non-athletes.

It can be said that non-athletes and students with low self-efficacy think that events and events are more difficult than they are, and this increases stress and anxiety. On the other hand, high self-efficacy helps create a sense of peace in facing difficult tasks and activities. In general, beliefs about self-efficacy determine and predict the level of people completing a difficult task. Student-athletes with a high sense of self-efficacy improve personal health and ability to perform tasks and tasks in many ways; People who are confident in their abilities view difficult tasks as challenges they need to overcome, and instead of seeing them as threatening and avoiding them, they choose challenging goals and remain strongly determined to achieve it. Self-efficacy; It can be used to treat mental illnesses, raise the standard of living in healthy people, increase hope and efforts, increase psychological resistance, and strengthen the defense power against stress. Therefore, self-efficacy seems to depend on having a positive attitude towards oneself and life, seeing himself as a productive being, and having the ability to feel empathy, closeness, and kindness with others for himself in life. Having a purpose and direction, believing in the values and beliefs of life, and managing his financial situation, will make him feel satisfied with his past and future. Also, positive mental health is a psychological part of self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is not the life experienced, but the embodiment of the life experienced by the individual over time. rather, it includes one's perspective and judgment on a situation, optimism towards different situations, hope, and resilience against problems. There is a difference in competitive anxiety between athletes and non-athletes. Another finding of the study showed that there was no significant difference in the competitive anxiety variable between athletes and non-athletes.

According to individual situations theory, they adjust their anxiety levels for optimal performance. On the other hand, students understand the situations that cause anxiety and adopting appropriate methods (providing encouragement, verbal persuasion, providing special emotional conditions, and using mental imaging methods) can relieve anxiety, increase their self-confidence and help them achieve. By controlling and not expressing misplaced emotions, students can avoid excessive anxiety due to inappropriate expectations in stressful situations and, on the other hand, elevate their mood and even manage their emotions in a way that motivates them to reach a worthwhile result, and therefore there is no difference between the two groups. Students in college exaggerate normal physical arousal and misinterpret physical manifestations of emotional arousal. Lack of exercise is believed to be a risk factor for many psychiatric disorders; because people suffering from this condition are under the pressure of the physical counterparts of emotions that cannot be expressed in words.

There is a difference in psychological toughness between students who are athletes and non-athletes. Another finding of the study showed that there was a significant difference in the psychological toughness variable between athletes and non-

athletes. Student-athletes are considered to have higher psychological toughness than non-athletes, due to higher average psychological toughness rankings in athletic students compared to other students.

In explaining this finding, athletes and students with high psychological toughness use active problem-solving methods, that is, a method that transforms mental pressure into a safe experience, to cope with problems, and therefore, the sense of anxiety and danger is very low in stubborn people in unfortunate events. Stubborn people know how to deal with stress successfully and efficiently despite unfortunate events, can find meaning in disturbing experiences, and believe in their role as valuable and important people. This is why stubborn people view unfortunate situations as challenging rather than threatening. They have a greater sense of commitment to themselves and their work, experience greater control over their lives, and view stressful factors as potential opportunities for change, thereby maintaining their mental health. For this reason, it can be said that stubborn people can improve their mental health due to their optimistic expression style, their sense of empowerment in the face of problems, their problem-oriented approach to problems, their positive expectations about the results, and their belief in their dependence on the future.

Since the present research was conducted among the students of Azad University, it is suggested that it be conducted with the students of other universities and be investigated comparatively. - It is suggested that researchers in future research choose the studied samples from other cities and compare them with the results of this research. - Other research methods such as interviews and observation should be used to collect data and its findings should be compared with the results of the current research. Counselors of counseling centers are suggested to put physical and sports activities on their agenda for the development of mental health and mental strength of students. - It is suggested to prevent negative thoughts from athletes by doing regular exercises and through frequent support such as encouraging and praising the talents and abilities of student-athletes (even in case of failure), thereby strengthening their mental strength. Raise to do competitions. This action, in turn, has created a positive impression on students, and their competitive anxiety is also reduced. - It is suggested that careful planning for educational topics and also taking measures to improve the toughness and self-efficacy of students, which are important factors involved in academic success and creating motivation, are suggested.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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