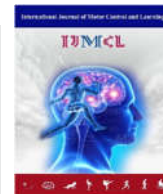




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### A Comparison Between Sports Motivation and Social Physique Anxiety between Blind and Visually Impaired Elite Athletes in Individual and Team Sports



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#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Sports psychology literature shows that motivation is essential in individual and team sports. This study compares sports motivation and Social Physique Anxiety (SPA) between blind and visually impaired elite athletes in individual and team sports.

**Methods:** The study is comparative in terms of design. The population was Iranian professional blind and visually impaired athletes in 2021. The sample includes N=110, n=35 in team sports (football and Goalball) and n=75 in individual sports (swimming, chess, wrestling, athletics), selected by convenience sampling method. The research tool was Sport Motivation Scale (SMS-18) and Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS). Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent t-test and analysis of variance) are used to analyze the data with SPSS 24.

**Results:** The results show a significant difference between the stimulating experience of athletes in individual and group sports in sports motivation components ( $P < 0.05$ ), and no significant difference is observed for other research variables ( $P > 0.05$ ). Also, the analysis of variance showed no significant difference between the elite athletes in individual and team sports in terms of sports motivation ( $P = 0.982$ ) and SPA ( $P = 0.937$ ).

**Conclusion:** It is suggested that the factors affecting the motivation of sports participation of blind athletes in other sports should be examined. We need to focus more on programs that reduce SPA in blind and visually impaired athletes.

#### 1. Introduction

Sports psychology literature shows that motivation is essential in individual and team sports. Therefore, analyzing motivational differences between athletes in team sports may be an essential source of information to select and manage the athletes' development (Bratko, Trninić, & Trninić, 2020). Meanwhile, blind athletes are no exception to this. The blind sports research dates back to when our country's blind football team was able to win a silver medal in the Paralympic Games. The athlete often leaves the club due to amotivation or even the coach's attitude or how they speak; thus, a national talent and a chance for a medal in the future is lost. After reviewing the necessary resources in the country and the research background, the researcher found that the necessary background on motivational exercise for the blind is not available in the country. "Motivation refers to the extent to which our behavior is selected, directed, energized, and maintained to satisfy a particular motivation" (Lautenbach et al., 2021).

On the other hand, sports motivation is critical for sustainability and commitment (Batista et al., 2020) and plays a crucial role in athletic performance and well-being (Gherghel et al., 2021). One theory that helps explain motivational processes is self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1991). The SDT

determines that motivation is in a chain in which three levels are distinguished. Autonomous motivation included introjected, integrated, and identified regulation (performing an activity for one's pleasure that requires practice); controlled motivation includes internal and external regulation (determined by rewards or external identification) and arousal (least self-determination and unwilling practice) (Leyton-Román, de la Vega, & Jiménez-Castuera, 2021). There are many views on the pure nature of motivation. Athletes may differ in the type and intensity of the exercise process that reflects the athletic performance and achievements, different from situational factors. Sports psychologists can view motivation from several points, including achievement motivation, competitive stress motivation, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Bratko et al., 2020).

In addition, the motivation to sports participation is one of the topics of interest for researchers in sports psychology, given individual characteristics such as age, gender, experience, Research on why people turn to a particular sport or the reasons for not continuing the activity and the degree of variability of motivational priorities are conducted (Moradi, Bahrami, & Dana, 2020). Jakobsen (2014) showed that athletes in team sports have more points in interest or pleasure than individual sports but did not find any difference in motivation for participation in team and individual sports. Leutenbach et al. (2021) showed no difference in motivation between the type of sport (individual vs. team sport) and the number of competitions during the

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year (Lautenbach et al., 2021). Tavakoli Fard (2021) showed a significant difference between the sports motivation of athletes in team and individual sports (Tavakoli Fard, 2021). Individual sports athletes were more motivated than team sports athletes. Moradi et al. (2020) compared the motivation of athletes to participate in team and individual sports and showed that among the components of motivation for sports participation, there was only the dimension of success in team and individual sports and friendship in male and female athletes (Moradi et al., 2020). No significant difference was observed between the other components. Sedighi et al. (2011) showed a significant difference between the motivation to participate in contact and non-contact sports so that the motivation to participate in individual and non-contact sports was more than contact sports (Siddiq Hatami, Mashhoudi, & Tayari, 2011).

In addition, the competitive nature of the sport and the performance in stressful situations give the athlete a different emotional experience. Every sport has different types of stress. For example, researchers found that players' anxiety increased before the first game (Ismail & Amer, 2016). Katsikas et al. (2009) emphasized that an individual sports athlete controls anxiety and confidence better than team sports athletes (Katsikas, Argeitaki, & Smirioutou, 2009). Therefore, another variable that plays an important role is Social Physique Anxiety (SPA). Social anxiety can be defined as a common anxiety disorder characterized by extreme fear of embarrassment, humiliation, and negative evaluation by others in social settings and avoidance of frightening situations (Ü. D. Üstün & Yapici, 2019). In this regard, one of the people's concerns in social encounters about their bodies is social anxiety called SPA. This anxiety is experienced when a person is concerned about others' assessments of their body (Hart, Leary, & Rejeski, 1989). In other words, SPA is based on an individual's experience in responding to assessments of their physical condition related to the concept of body image (Hartati, Wahyu Indra Bayu, & Silvi Aryanti, 2019). In addition, SPA was first suggested in fitness and is strongly associated with sports.

Thus, the concept of SPA is widely used in sports psychology (Jin et al., 2021). People with higher levels of SPA are less likely to participate in sports because of fear of presenting themselves to others (Hartati et al., 2019). Gammage et al. (2004) supported these observations and suggested a negative relationship between SPA and the effectiveness of self-presentation sports (Gammage, Ginis, & Hall, 2004). Recent studies have also shown that exercise may help reduce SPA (Lindwall & Lindgren, 2005). This finding reflects the two approaches to coping with SPA proposed by Hart et al. (1989): avoidance and corrective behavior. Avoidance is generally considered as the primary behavioral tendency to deal with anxiety. Corrective behavior is also considered healthy to deal with SPA (Jin & Fung, 2021).

Sports contain anxiety in many aspects. In addition, researchers examined anxiety in various ways as a determinant of sports. For example, Tezcan Kardaş (2018) examined the state-trait anxiety of football players between 13-16 years old and stated that the factors affecting the level of anxiety of athletes appear in different ways, and this condition is affected by different factors (Kardaş, 2018). Similarly, Civan et al. (2010) examined the state-trait anxiety of athletes interested in individual and team sports (Civan, Arı, Görücü, & Özdemir, 2010). They found that individuals who engaged in individual sports differed significantly in terms of pre-competition anxiety and those who engaged in group sports in terms of generalized anxiety. Üstün and Yapici (2019) compared their perceived social anxiety in high school students participating in individual and team sports (Ü. D. Üstün & Yapici, 2019). Findings showed no significant difference between social anxiety variables based on sport classification and exercise duration. However, professional sports participants have more social avoidance and situational anxiety. Lotfi et al. (2013) showed significant differences between blind athlete and non-athlete girls regarding coordination, health, physical activity, strength, endurance, athletic competence, and general self-concept (Lotfi, 2017). Gronmo and Augestad (2000) also studied the effect of

physical activity on normal and blind adolescent girls and boys aged 13 to 16 years (Gronmo & Augestad, 2000). Subjects participated in weekly school physical education classes. The subjects' self-concept did not show improvement. Greguol et al. (2014) studied physical activity and body image in people with visual impairment and found that physical activity positively affected body image and body mass index (Greguol, Gobbi, & Carraro, 2014).

Yavari (2015) also showed that despite the differences in the data related to social anxiety and its subsets, except for fear of social isolation, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups (Yavari, 2015). Also, in the blind athletes' group, the fear of public speaking had a significant relationship with age and exercise. Jajat et al. (2020) also showed a difference between adolescent boys and girls in SPA (Hartati et al., 2019). A literature review shows that few studies have compared blind and visually impaired athletes in team and individual sports.

Sport is important for a healthy and happy life. However, exercise is of different importance to people with disabilities (Dalbudak, 2019). Exercise is frequently used in the education and treatment of people with disabilities. This phenomenon causes the disabled person to reach the desired standards. Positive attitudes and behaviors of people with disabilities while exercising significantly impact the family, the environment, and the competition. Although visually impaired people are the smallest group of people with disabilities, their role is vital regarding the extent of their disabilities.

Regarding the research necessity, sensory disabled people, including blind and visually impaired athletes, do not have direct limitations in terms of movement. However, disability in all or part of the sensory organs reduces the dominance of motor abilities. Damage to the sensory part of these people causes them not to be able to receive much visual information from the environment and, as a result, will not be able to interact socially with the outside environment; this isolation from society isolates them and undermines their mental and physical health as well as their motivations. Motivational and psychological variables in terms of social and antisocial behaviors in sports should be considered; such studies on people with physical disabilities are almost non-existent (Boardley and Kavussanu, 2007).

Therefore, comparing the components of sports motivation and SPA and understanding these variables for blind athletes in team and individual sports can be a helpful guide in finding better ways to attract them more to sports activity and understanding and improving their self-concept. Accurate identification of the athlete's motivation can lead to higher mental toughness, greater endurance, and better-perceived competence. Paying attention to the differences in sports motivation and social anxiety can help the coach guide the athlete better and understand the body image. Given that motivational differences between different sports have also been proven, examining the type and SPA for blind athletes in team and individual sports is necessary.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Subjects

The study is retrospective descriptive with a causal-comparative design in nature and applied in terms of purpose. The population was professional Iranian blind and visually impaired athletes in 2021. The sample was selected using the convenience sampling method and included 110 people, 35 in team sports (17 in football 28 in Goalball), and 75 in individual sports (18 in swimming, 32 in chess, 5 in wrestling 10 in athletics people). Each athlete had at least two years of experience in a specific sport or in participating in provincial or national blind competitions.

Visual impairment is the vision loss of one or both eyes, entirely or partially. Visually impaired people are classified based on their level of vision. Sports are also classified. IBSA has defined three classes at an international event for partially or entirely blind athletes. Each class has sports classifications that visually impaired people can do.

B1: Athletes in this category are entirely or almost entirely blind; they perceive light but cannot recognize the shape of the hand from any distance.

B2: Although they can recognize the shape of the hand, their visual acuity is less than 20.600, and their visual field is less than 50 degrees.

B3. Athletes in this category have a visual field of 5-200. Their visual acuity is 20.600, 60.600 (Dalbudak, 2019).

It should be noted that the blind is considered as a group of sensory disabled people. This group of disabled people includes sensory-visual impairments, which in this study included all athletes with low vision or blindness in the Islamic Republic of Iran who were completely deprived of the sense of sight or were in the low-vision classification.

## 2.2. Apparatus and task

### **Sports Motivation Scale (SMS-18)**

This scale has 28 items prepared in 1995 by Pelletier et al. to measure the sports motivation of individuals by intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. This 7-point Likert scale has seven subscales, each measured by 4 items. Three of these subscales measure intrinsic motivation (to know, to accomplish, and experience stimulation), three measure extrinsic motivation (social identity, introjection, and social relationships regulation), and one measure amotivation. Tudor (2009) reported the internal reliability of the subscales of this test from 0.72 to 0.85 (Tudor, 2009). Cronbach's alpha also showed acceptable values from 0.71 to 0.85. Salehi and Rahmani (2010) showed that the reliability based on Cronbach's alpha is 0.92 and based on the Bisection method is 0.88 (Salehi and Rahmani, 2010).

### **Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS)**

This scale was compiled by Motl and Conroy (2000) (Motl and Conroy, 2000) and consisted of 7 Likert items based on the original 12-item scale of Hart et al. (1989) (Hart et al., 1989). This scale measures the anxiety related to body image in a social situation. It is measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (strongly). Subjects' scores range from 7 to 49. The higher a person's score, the higher the levels of social anxiety. Scott et al. (2004) reported the time reliability of this test 0.94 based on the test-retest method (Scott et al., 2004). Yousefi et al. (2009) also obtained internal reliability of 0.85 for female students and 0.81 for male students (Yousefi and Hassani, 2009).

## 2.3. Procedure

After explaining the research objectives and making the necessary coordination with officials and managers, sampling was performed, and the athletes were selected in accordance. In order to observe the research ethics and the participants' rights, they were told that they could cancel whenever they did not want to continue and complete the questionnaire. It was also explained that the information in the questionnaire would be confidential and anonymous.

## 2.4. Data analysis

In order to determine the content validity of the research questionnaires, a survey was conducted by ten expert professors with a focus on management and sports psychology. After applying their opinions, the questionnaires were approved. In order to measure reliability, Cronbach's alpha method was used, which was calculated  $\alpha = 0.85$  for SPA and  $\alpha = 0.78$  for sports motivation, indicating good reliability of the questionnaires. SPSS 24 was used to analyze the data in two sections: descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics included independent t-test and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to compare sports motivation and SPA of blind elite athletes in individual and team sports.

## 3. Results

Also, in Table 1, the average of descriptive indicators related to sports motivation and SPA is shown for the two groups of athletes in individual and team sports.

Based on descriptive findings, out of 110 participating athletes,

67 were men, and 43 were women. Initially, the researcher used the independent t-test to evaluate the sports motivation of blind elite athletes in individual and team sports. The results are shown in Table 1.

According to Table 2, except for experience simulation ( $P = 0.006$ ), there is no significant difference between the sports motivation of elite athletes in individual and team sports in components of to know ( $P = 0.895$ ), to accomplish ( $P = 0.677$ ), social identity ( $P = 0.099$ ), introjection ( $P = 0.674$ ), social relationships regulation ( $P = 0.377$ ), amotivation ( $P = 0.179$ ) and sports motivation ( $P = 0.982$ ).

The MANOVA is used to compare sports motivation and SPA of blind elite athletes in individual and team sports. Before analyzing the results of MANOVA, the assumptions of this test were used by Box's M Test to examine the equality of covariance and Levene's test to test the equality of variances. Considering the values ( $P = 0.057$ ,  $F = 4.637$ ), the assumption of the equality of covariance is rejected. Therefore, to determine the significance of the effect of sports motivation and SPA of elite athletes in individual and team sports, the results of the Pillai's Trace are reported.

Also, Levene's test shows that the variance of sport motivation variables ( $P = 0.302$ ,  $F = 1.101$ ) and SPA ( $P = 0.105$ ,  $F = 2.655$ ) in two groups of athletes in individual and team are equal.

Based on the results of Pillai's Trace test the effect of sports motivation and SPA of athletes on the linear composition of the studied variables is significant ( $P = 0.001$ ,  $F = 75.344$ ) (Table 3).

According to the results of the MANOVA, in sports motivation ( $P = 0.982$ ) between individual sports ( $M = 3.014$ ) and team sports ( $M = 3.015$ ) of the blind athletes; Also, in SPA there is no significant difference ( $P = 0.937$ ) among blind elite athletes in individual ( $M = 2.539$ ) and team sports ( $M = 2.532$ ) (Table 4).

**Table 1.** Descriptive indicators between sports motivation and SPA of blind elite athletes in individual and team sports.

Group	n	Variable	Mean	Sd
Individual sports	75	Sports motivation	3.014	0.250
		SPA	2.539	0.214
Team sports	35	Sports motivation	3.015	0.492
		SPA	2.532	0.378

**Table 2.** Independent t-test of sports motivation of elite athletes in individual and team sports.

Variable	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$	Difference	df	t	Sig(2-tailed)
	Team sports	Individual sports	$\bar{X}$			
To know	3.855	3.900	0.01429	108	132	0.895
To accomplish	3.260	3.318	0.05804	108	417	0.677
Experience simulation	3.682	3.356	-0.32589	108	-2.824	0.006
Social identity	2.271	2.500	0.22857	108	1.664	0.099
Introjection	2.421	2.468	0.47320	108	459	0.647
Social relationship regulation	2.921	3.043	0.12232	108	887	0.377
Amotivation	2.644	2.512	-0.15179	108	-1.363	0.176
Total	3.015	3.014	-0.00102	108	-0.023	0.982

**Table 3.** Results of Pillai's Trace in multivariate analysis of variance of sports motivation and SPA of blind elite athletes in individual and team sports.

Test	Value	F	Trace df	Error df	Sig	Eta squared
Pillai's Trace	0.687	75.344	2	108	0.001	0.595

**Table 4.** Results of MANOVA between sports motivation and SPA of blind elite athletes in individual and team sports.

Variable	Mean squared	Df	F	P
Sports motivation	1.230	1	0.001	0.982
SPA	0.115	1	0.006	0.937

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study compared the SPA and sports motivation among blind athletes in team and individual sports. Findings show that there is no difference between the sports motivation of blind elite athletes in individual and team sports except for the component of experience simulation. Motivations are the factors that stimulate the behavior of athletes, lead them in the right direction, and create harmony through them. People differ in their ability to do a particular task and their willingness to do it or the motivation that drives them. The researchers also found that the highest level of autonomy indicates intrinsic motivation, and the lowest level of autonomy indicates amotivation. The present study results indicate that there is no difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of blind athletes in team and individual sports. The results are consistent with Brennan (1986), who concluded that there is no significant difference between the intrinsic motivation of student-athletes in individual and group sports (Brennan, 1986). Jakobsen (2014) also showed no difference in the motivation for sports participation in team and individual sports (Jakobsen, 2014). However, Benar and Loghmani (2012) show that athletes in individual sports are more motivated to exercise than athletes in team sports (Benar & Loghmani, 2014). Perhaps the difference is due to the nature and type of individual sports and the population and research tools. Blind elite athletes in individual and team sports may have the same intrinsic motivation. The results show that for blind athletes in team and individual sports, to know, to accomplish, social identity, introjection, and social relationships regulation play an important role. Also, blind athletes in team and individual sports are at a desirable level of autonomy. However, the results showed that simulating experiences are significantly different between blind athletes in team and individual sports, more in team sports than individual sports.

The results show no significant difference between SPA among blind athletes in team and individual sports. Although similar results have not been observed, Göktürk (2011) showed that participants in team sports have more social anxiety in the sub-dimensions of "fear of negative evaluation" and "social avoidance and General distress," but these results are slight, and there is no significant difference between them (Göktürk, 2011). Inconsistent with the present study, Üstün and Yapıcı (2019) showed that participants in individual professional sports have more social avoidance and situational anxiety (U. Üstün & Yapıcı, 2019). Due to the characteristics of professional sports, since professional sports require more effort and training, these efforts cause pressure and anxiety among all blind athletes, including team or individual sports. As a result, there is not much difference in terms of

SPA between blind athletes in team and individual sports. Blind athletes, especially those deprived of this superior sense since birth or early childhood, may not have a clear understanding of their body and its fat. The results can also be justified because the pleasant opinion about appearance is highly dependent on the sense of sight. The blindness of the subjects can be considered as a reason for their significant indifference. It is not surprising for the blind, given social anxiety's significant components. As mentioned, self-concept is formed in childhood and adolescence, and because these people lack the sense of sight, they have difficulty in some physical awareness and body image.

The present study is cross-sectional and may limit the descriptive findings in some aspects. Therefore, future studies should focus on results for larger samples and different study designs to examine cause and effect. Also, the present study was limited to male and female athletes with sensory disabilities, or in other words, the blind and visually impaired. the number of people in the team and individual sports are not equal. It is necessary to consider the same number in the two groups. Results suggest that coaches and sports managers consider these factors to enhance participation and training. It is also suggested that the factors affecting the motivation of sports participation of blind athletes in other sports should be examined. We need to focus more on programs that reduce SPA in blind athletes.

#### Conflict of interests

The Authors declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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