

Comparison of Loneliness Levels in Visually Impaired from Different Sports Branches

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ABSTRACT The present study is aimed at both, to determine loneliness levels of the visually handicapped athletes from different branches and to compare loneliness levels of the athletes playing and not playing sports. Three hundred-forty visually handicapped athletes, consisting of 280 visually handicapped male athletes participating in goalball, B1, B2-B3 Futsal, Track and Fields and Judo competitions within the 2011-2012 season activity program of Turkey for the Blind Athletics Championships and 60 visually handicapped athletes who did not take part in any sport branches, were included in the research. The Personal Information Form was prepared to obtain personal data of those visually handicapped ones who participated in the research. Besides, the UCLA Loneliness Scale was used to determine their loneliness states. As a result, statistically, a significant difference was determined between sport branches like goalball: 56.07±8.33 score, Track and Fields: 50.35±5.45 score, Futsal: 52.85±6.43 score, Judo: 50.58±4.43 score and loneliness points.

INTRODUCTION

Sports enables individuals to get out of their narrow worlds, to affect and be affected from other environments, other individuals, beliefs, ideas, and to affect them, and to engage in dialogue with them. Out of this perspective, sports can be claimed to establish new friendships, reinforce friendships, and support social cohesion. Thus, handicapped individuals who are encouraged to sports can be integrated to society faster, and they will not go aside and be weary of life (Ölmez 2010). As for all individuals, sports is one of the best methods preferred for the socialization of visually handicapped, development of their senses of belonging, their integration to society, and overcoming their feeling of loneliness (Öztürk et al. 2006; Sari 2007). Every human being comes into the world through a physical structure that runs in a specific way, and they differ from each other in terms of the qualities of this physical structure. As these differences involve some problems, they are called handicaps. Thus, that physical handicaps can be affective

on the development of personality should be taken into consideration, while mentioning the concepts of self and self-esteem (Enc 2005).

The extent that a handicap can be noticed by the naked eye is the indicator of the level that it will be marked by the society. The more a handicap is noticeable, the more likely it is to disrupt the flow of communication. These individuals are totally aware of other individuals' negative attitudes towards them, and that they will encounter prejudice and discrimination in many aspects of their lives (Richardson et al. 1961). Weiss viewed that loneliness is felt as a result of the interaction between personality factors and situational factors (Weiss 1987). According to Holmen et al. loneliness is a strong indicator of the problems encountered in the memory (Turkish Journal of Geriatrics 2005). Visually impaired individuals have no problems doing many sports branches such as Goalball, Judo, Track and Fields, Futsal B1, Futsal B2-B3, and swimming. Besides being beneficial to physical health and strength, these sports are also thought to ease the feeling of loneliness and strengthen the feeling of being an individual in the society.

The researchers aimed in this study both to determine loneliness levels of the visually handicapped athletes in different branches and to compare loneliness levels of the athletes playing and not playing sports.

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MATERIAL AND METHODS

Two hundred and eighty (280) visually impaired male athletes who competed in goalball, B1, B2-B3 Futsal, Track and Fields, and Judo competitions within the 2011-2012 activity program of the Turkish Blind Sport Federation voluntarily participated in the research. The "Personal Information Form" was developed to obtain data related to personal information of the visually impaired athletes who participated in the research. The "UCLA Loneliness Scale" was used to measure the loneliness levels of the individuals. These forms were written in Braille alphabet, and each form was filled for each visually impaired athlete via face-to-face interviews. Obtained data was analyzed using the SPSS statistical packaged software, and significance level was taken as $p < 0.05$. Findings showed that statistically significant differences were found between the sports done by the visually impaired athletes and their loneliness scores (Goalball: 56.07 ± 8.33 points, Track and Fields: 50.35 ± 5.45 points, Futsal: 52.85 ± 6.43 points, Judo: 50.58 ± 4.43 points).

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of age, height and Body Mass Index (BMI) in the three age groups from 15 to 25+ years. The frequency of normal BMI among the impaired athletes is 67.1 percent.

Table 1: Age, height, and body-mass index distribution of visually impaired athletes

Age	<i>f</i>	%
15-19	108	31.8
20-25	129	37.9
25 and more	103	30.3
Total	340	100.0
<i>Height</i>	<i>f</i>	%
150-164 cm	48	14.1
165-179 cm	199	58.5
180 cm and more	93	27.4
Total	340	100.0
<i>BMI</i>	<i>f</i>	%
Thin	4	1.2
Normal	228	67.1
Fat	108	31.8
Total	340	100.0

As can be observed in the Table 2, 142 (43.8%) of the participants have other visually impaired members in their families, and 198

(56.2%) have no other visually impaired members in their families.

Table 2: Distribution of visually impaired athletes according to whether, there are other visually impaired members in their families

<i>Impaired</i>	<i>f</i>	%
Yes	142	43.8
No	198	56.2
Total	340	100.0

As can be seen in the Table 3, 70 (20.6%) of the participants play goalball, 70 (20.6%) of the participants compete in Track and Fields, 70 (20.6%) of the participants play Judo, 70 (20.6%) of the participants do play Futsal, and 60 (17.6%) of the participants do not play any branch of sports.

Table 3: Distribution of sports branch done by the visually impaired athletes

<i>Sport branch</i>	<i>f</i>	%
Goalball	70	20.6
Track and fields	70	20.6
Judo	70	20.6
Futsal	70	20.6
No sports branch	60	17.6
Total	340	100.0

As can be understood from the Table 4, 123 (42.1%) of the athletes are in B1 category, 91 (32.6%) of the athletes are in B2 category, and 66 (25.3%) of the athletes are in B3 category.

Table 4: Sight classification distribution of the visually impaired athletes

<i>Sight classification</i>	<i>f</i>	%
B1	123	42.1
B2	91	32.6
B3	66	25.3
Total	280	100.0

As can be observed in the Table 5, loneliness scores of visually impaired athletes who play goalball is higher than the athletes who do Judo, Track and Fields, and Futsal. Additionally, visually impaired individuals who do not do any sports have higher loneliness scores than the visually impaired individuals who do sports.

According to the statistical analysis, there is a significant correlation between the loneliness

Table 5: Loneliness score distribution of the visually impaired athletes according to the sport branch (n=340)

Variables	n	%	UCLA loneliness score Mean±sd
<i>Sport Branch</i>			
Goalball	70	20.6	56.07±8.33
Judo	70	20.6	50.35±5.45
Track and fields	70	20.6	52.85±6.43
Futsal	70	20.6	50.58±4.43
No sports	60	17.6	54.86±5.46
<i>Doing or Not Doing Sports</i>			
Doing sports	280	82.4	52.46±6.70
Not doing sports	60	17.6	54.86±5.46

scores and the period of doing sports of the visually impaired athletes ($\chi^2_3 = 26.925$; $p < 0.05$) (see Table 6). The Mann Whitney U Test was conducted on groups of two to determine the source of difference. According to the mean ranks obtained from the test, there are significant differences between athletes doing sports for 1-4 years, and not doing sports, between athletes doing sports for 5-9 years, and not doing sports,

and between athletes doing sports for 1-4 years, and athletes doing sports for 5-9 years.

According to the statistical analysis, there are significant differences between the loneliness scale scores of the visually impaired athletes, according to the attitudes of their families ($\chi^2_3 = 11.972$; $p < 0.05$) (see Table 7). The Mann Whitney U Test was conducted on groups of two in order to determine the source of difference. According to the mean ranks obtained from the test, there are significant differences between the athletes from democratic families and indifferent families, and between democratic families and authoritarian families.

According to the statistical analysis results, there are significant differences between loneliness scores of the visually impaired athletes who participated in the present research and their mothers' educational background [$\chi^2_3 = 41.220$; $p < 0.05$] (see Table 8). The Mann Whitney U Test was conducted on groups of two to determine the source of difference. According to the mean ranks obtained from the test, there are significant differences between loneliness scores of

Table 6: Kruskal Wallis H test results on the doing sports period and loneliness scores of visually impaired athletes

Period of doing sports	N	Mean rank	Sd	χ^2	p	Significant difference
1-4 years (1)	197	170.08	3	26.925	0.000	1-4
5-9 years (2)	75	131.17				2-4
10 years and more (3)	8	192.38				1-2
Not doing sports (4)	60	218.125				

Table 7: Kruskal Wallis H test results on the family attitude and behaviour; and loneliness scores of the visually impaired athletes

Family attitude	N	Mean rank	Sd	χ^2	p	Significant difference
Democratic (1)	60	143.29	3	11.972	0.000	1-4
Protective (2)	104	180.85				1-3
Authoritarian (3)	96	152.19				
Indifferent (4)	80	150.12				

Table 8: Kruskal Wallis H test results on the loneliness scores and educational background of the mothers of the visually impaired athletes

Mothers' education	N	Mean rank	Sd	χ^2	p	Significant difference
Illiterate (1)	110	151.85	3	41.220	0.000	1-2
Primary School (2)	157	203.84				2-3
High School (3)	66	120.51				2-4
Bachelor's (4)	7	124.64				

the athletes whose mothers are primary school graduates and illiterate, and between the athletes whose mothers are high school graduates and university graduates.

According to the statistical analysis results, there are significant differences between loneliness scores of the visually impaired athletes who participated in the present research and their fathers' educational background ($\chi^2_3=17.027$; $p<0.05$) (see Table 9). The Mann Whitney U Test was conducted on groups of two to determine the source of difference. According to the mean ranks obtained from the test, there are significant differences between loneliness scores of the athletes whose fathers are university graduates and illiterate, and between high school graduates and university graduates.

According to the statistical analysis, there are significant differences between the loneliness scores of the visually impaired athletes who participated in the research, and the branch of sport they do [$\chi^2_3= 33.046$ $p<0.05$] (Table 10). The Mann Whitney U Test was conducted on groups

of two to determine the source of difference. According to the mean ranks obtained from the test, there are significant differences between loneliness scores of athletes who do goalball, and the loneliness scores of athletes who do Track and Fields, Judo, and Futsal. Additionally, there is a significant difference between the loneliness score average of the athletes who do sports and the loneliness scores of individuals who do not do sports.

According to the statistical analysis, there are significant differences between the loneliness scores of the visually impaired athletes who participated in the research according to the occupations of their mothers [$\chi^2_3= 21.141$; $p>0.05$]. The Mann Whitney U Test was conducted on groups of two to determine the source of difference. According to the mean ranks obtained from the test, there are significant differences between loneliness scores of athletes whose mothers are unemployed and the scores of athletes whose mothers work as white-collar or blue-collar workers, and between the scores of athletes whose

Table 9: Kruskal Wallis H test results on the loneliness scores and educational background of the fathers of the visually impaired athletes

<i>Fathers' education</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean rank</i>	<i>Sd</i>	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>Significant difference</i>
Illiterate (1)	24	200.81	3	17.027	0.000	1-4
Primary School (2)	136	176.56				3-4
High School (3)	133	173.84				
Bachelor's (4)	36	110.26				
Post Graduate	11	186.18				

Table 10: Kruskal Wallis H test results on the loneliness scores and sport branches of the visually impaired athletes

<i>Sport branch</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean rank</i>	<i>Sd</i>	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>Significant difference</i>
Goalball (1)	70	212.97	3	52.185	0.000	1-4, 1-3
Track and Fields (2)	70	168.87				1-2, 2-5
Judo (3)	70	128.82				3-5
Futsal(4)	70	130.51				
No Sports (5)	60	218.13				

Table 11: Kruskal Wallis H test results on the loneliness scores and occupation of the mothers of the visually impaired athletes

<i>Mother occupation</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean rank</i>	<i>Sd</i>	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>Significant difference</i>
Unemployed (1)	269	171.17	3	21.141	0.000	1-2, 1-3, 2-3
White Collar (2)	39	123.03				
Blue Collar (3)	26	236.33				
Retired (4)	6	163.67				

mothers work as a white-collar worker and whose mothers work as a blue-collar worker.

DISCUSSION

People need sports facilities that are one of the most important social activity for health public. Besides, loneliness is an unwanted situation for everyone. Loneliness is a situation experienced by an individual, where there is an unpleasant or inadmissible lack of (quality of) certain relationships (De Jong Gierveld 1998). Indicate that many people with impairments live a sedentary lifestyle. Especially health-related concern is the higher prevalence of physical inactivity in adolescents compared to children in the general population (Armstrong and Welsman 2006; Kollé et al. 2010) and in populations of individuals with visual impairment (Kozub and Oh 2004). Researchers have also reported that activity levels and mobility are limited and a quality of life is lower than sighted adolescents (Chadha and Subramanian 2011).

According to the findings of the present research, there are significant differences between the loneliness scores of the visually impaired athletes who play goalball and the scores of athletes who do Track and Fields, Judo, and Futsal. Athletes who play goalball experience less feelings of loneliness. Also, researchers have reported high prevalence of loneliness among the visually impaired persons (Alma et al. 2011; Verstraten et al. 2005). So experts are offering that sports are more extrovert, more social, more active, more outgoing, prioritize sense of belonging, self-actualization and more easy-going (Kuru 2000; Topcu and Kabasakal 2001; Yazicilar 2004). Individuals who do team sports feel more trust towards, and less threat from people in interpersonal relationships. This finding can be explained with the fact that team sports instill the feeling of "us", and thus relationships are more easily established.

While Aktop (2002) did not find any significant differences between loneliness and self-esteem scores of athletes who do team sports and individual sports, Turan (2010) found a significant difference between the loneliness scores of athletes who do team sports and who do individual sports. The study shows that loneliness levels of visually impaired who perform sports of various branches were compared and significant differences were found between the visual-

ly impaired athletes according to the sport branches they do.

As a result, inactivity among individuals with visually impaired has been linked to a variety of psychosocial and sociological factors, one of which is parents' behaviors regarding physical activity. Parents try to make an effort for their children.

CONCLUSION

Consequently, total loneliness scores of the visually impaired athletes who play goalball were found to be higher than the athletes who do other sports. Besides, a significant difference was detected between the loneliness scores of the visually impaired athletes who do sports and the ones who do not do sports.

As it was found that doing sports or participating in a sportive activity decreases the loneliness levels of visually impaired individuals, it is suggested that visually impaired individuals are encouraged to take more part in sportive activities. It is known that individuals who do team sports are more social than the individuals who do individual sports. Hence, sports clubs for handicapped individuals should include more team sports while selecting the sports branches.

The number of the physical education and sportive activities for visually impaired individuals should be increased for them to gain independent movement skills. Trainers state that they cannot find enough equipment for the training of visually impaired athletes. This lack of equipment should be made up for the trainers to be able to teach the sport branches to visually impaired individuals correctly.

Expert family trainers should educate the families with impaired children so that they can develop correct attitudes towards their children, and implement correct behavior models. In addition, more such scientific researches are required to examine the reasons affecting the loneliness of the visually impaired individuals.

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