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Participation motivation in disabled athletes

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Abstract

Background and Study Aim Sports have significant effects on individuals of all ages and levels, particularly for those with disabilities. These effects are seen in terms of self-expression and competence skills. The aim of this study was to measure the motivation levels of disabled athletes in their participation in sports.

Material and Methods The study involved 151 voluntary participants. The 'Motivation Scale for Participation in Sports for Disabled Individuals' was utilized. Independent t-tests and One-Way ANOVA multiple comparison tests were employed to compare differences between two independent groups and determine variations between variables.

Results Significant differences were found in the motivation levels of disabled individuals in terms of gender, disability status, nationality, type of sport, and social status factors. Female participants were found to have higher levels of both internal and external motivation compared to males. It was determined that the internal motivation of individuals with hearing impairments is higher than those with visual and intellectual disabilities. Additionally, the external motivation levels of individuals with physical, visual, and hearing impairments are higher than those with intellectual disabilities. National athletes have been found to have high levels of external motivation. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the internal and external motivations of individual sports participants compared to those participating in team sports. No significant differences were found in the duration of participants' athletic careers. Individuals who gained social status through sports were found to have high levels of external motivation.

Conclusions Among the positive effects of sports in human life, it is observed that there are many positive values that sports bring to individuals. This includes the internal and external motivation it provides. Sports have significant effects on self-expression and self-sufficiency skills for individuals of all ages and levels, especially for individuals with disabilities. In this context, the participation of disabled individuals in sports becomes crucial in terms of their personal development and facilitating their lives, both physiologically, psychologically, and sociologically.

Keywords: motivation, disabilities, athletes, participation, sports

Introduction

The intersection of disability and sports presents complex challenges that extend beyond physical limitations. Despite the recognized benefits of sports for overall health and social integration, individuals with disabilities often face barriers to participation.

Sport is a significant tool for promoting overall health [1, 2] and fostering social connections [3]. Disability encompasses limitations in physical movement, exercise abilities, and intellectual skills. When disability and sports are considered together, the lack of exercise or participation among disabled individuals can increase the risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, hypertension, and diabetes [4]. Additionally, individuals with hearing, vision, or mobility impairments may experience psychological stress [5]. Mental health conditions are also recognized as significant factors in athletic success [6, 7]. Studies indicate that positive personality traits, motivation, confidence, focus, and perceived social support play crucial roles in preventing athletes from experiencing stress and achieving success in sports.

It should be noted that rewards, physical support, and various interactions can lead to significant outcomes for both disabled individuals and their families. These outcomes may include improvements in self-esteem, self-confidence, social skills, positive personal perceptions, and the development of physical and motor skills [9].

Motivation is the process that initiates, guides, and sustains goal-oriented behaviors. It is widely recognized as the driving force behind athletes' actions [10]. Particularly in sports, motivation plays a crucial role in fostering active participation and continuity [11]. Therefore, developing motivational strategies, especially tailored for disabled athletes, and providing ongoing support for these strategies is essential [12]. Motivation can stem from both internal and external sources, with the possibility of experiencing demotivation as well. Essentially, motivation encompasses three primary factors: intrinsic motivation (the enjoyment derived from autonomously performing an activity),

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extrinsic motivation (engaging in an activity to motivate others or to attain external rewards), and demotivation (lack of intent to participate in a specific activity) [13]. Understanding the dynamics of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and demotivation is beneficial not only for individuals with special needs involved in sports but also for coaches and families alike [14].

Clearly, there is a need for further investigation into the factors influencing the motivation of individuals with special needs to participate in sports. It is imperative to thoroughly assess the motivation levels of disabled individuals involved in sports and scientifically evaluate the resultant positive or negative behaviors stemming from motivation.

Hence, the primary objective of the study is to assess the motivation levels of disabled individuals. The secondary aim is to investigate potential associations between motivation states and various factors such as gender, disability, nationality, type of sport, duration of participation in sports, and the role of sports in social status attainment.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The population of the study consists of 151 disabled athletes (also university students), including 54 women and 97 men participating in sports in Konya province. This research was approved by the Ethics Committee of Selçuk University Faculty of Sports Sciences with the ethics committee report number 134 and the date 04.10.2022.

Research Design

In this study, the 'Motivation Scale for Participation in Sports for Disabled Individuals' was utilized. This scale consists of 22 items and includes three subscales: 'intrinsic motivation,' 'extrinsic motivation,' and 'demotivation' [15]. Since the demotivation subscale contains negative statements, it was reverse-coded. The items related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation contain positive statements. The scale employs a 5-point Likert-type rating system, where higher scores indicate higher levels of motivation among individuals. The demographic information section comprised questions regarding gender, disability status, national athlete status, type of sport practiced, duration of involvement in sports, and the role of sports in social status attainment. A comparative model was employed for analysis.

Statistical Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.0 was employed for data analysis in this study. Parametric tests were conducted due to the normal distribution of the data, as indicated by kurtosis and skewness values within the range of ±2 [16]. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant. The normality test applied to the data confirmed their normal distribution. Independent t-tests were used to analyze differences between independent groups, while One-Way ANOVA multiple comparison tests were employed for comparing more than two independent groups.

Results

Tables 1-8 present the results of the statistical analysis conducted on the data obtained from the research. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistical results obtained from the participants.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics results of the obtained data

Variable		N	%
Gender	Female	54	35.8
	Male	97	64.2
Disability Situation	Physically Disabled	45	29.8
	Blind	36	23.8
	Deaf	50	33.2
	Mentally disabled	20	13.2
National Sportsmanship	Yes	59	39.1
	No	92	60.9
Type of Sport	Individual	98	64.9
	Team	53	35.1
Year of Sportsmanship	1-3 Years	22	14.6
	3-6 Years	36	23.8
	6-9 Years	39	25.8
	9 Years and Over	54	35.8
Social Status	Yes	128	84.8
	No	23	15.2
	Total	151	100.0

Based on the data from Table 1, it is evident that there is a predominance of males among the participants, with physical disabilities and deafness being the most prevalent conditions. The majority of participants are not national athletes, prefer individual sports over team sports, and have been engaged in sports for 3 to 9 years, indicating a sustained interest in sports.

Upon comparing the data obtained from the participants based on gender, statistically significant differences were found in the intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation subscales (Table 2). Female participants demonstrated higher levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation compared to male participants. However, no significant difference was observed in the demotivation subscale ($p > 0.05$).

Multiple comparison results based on the participants' disability status are presented in Table 3.

Significant differences were observed in the

dimensions of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and demotivation ($p < 0.05$). Tukey's test was conducted to identify specific group differences. The analysis revealed that in the intrinsic motivation dimension, participants with hearing impairments exhibited significantly different average scores compared to those with visual impairments and intellectual disabilities. Regarding the extrinsic motivation subscale, individuals with physical disabilities, visual impairments, and hearing impairments showed significantly higher average scores than those with intellectual disabilities. In terms of demotivation levels, a significant difference was found between individuals with hearing impairments and those with physical disabilities, with individuals with hearing impairments showing a more favorable outcome.

Table 4 provides comparison results based on the participants' status as national athletes.

Upon examining the analysis results, a significant difference was found favoring national athletes in the extrinsic motivation subscale ($p < 0.05$). However, no significant differences were observed in the intrinsic motivation and demotivation subscales.

The analysis results based on the types of sports practiced by the individuals are presented in Table 5. It indicates significant differences in the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation subscales ($p < 0.05$). Individuals engaging in individual sports demonstrated higher levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation compared to those engaging in team sports (this difference was found to be significant). Additionally, no significant difference was noted in the demotivation subscale.

Analysis results regarding the number of years individuals have been engaged in sports are presented in Table 6. According to the analyses, no statistically significant differences were found in the intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and demotivation subscales based on the duration of individuals' involvement in sports.

Significant differences were found in the analysis of data regarding whether sports provide individuals with social status in the extrinsic motivation subscale (Table 7). Upon examining the results, it was determined that individuals who answered «yes» to the question of whether sports provide social status had higher levels of extrinsic motivation compared to those who answered «no.» However, no statistically significant results were found in the intrinsic motivation and demotivation subscales.

The relationship between the subscales of the Sports Participation Motivation Scale is presented in Table 8. According to the analysis results, there is a moderate positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, and a low negative correlation between intrinsic motivation

Table 2. Comparison of data according to gender variable

Motivation Types	Gender	N	x	Sd	t	p
Intrinsic Motivation	Female	54	51.8333	6.49746	5.368	.001*
	Male	97	44.0412	11.33938		
Extrinsic Motivation	Female	54	19.0185	4.11848	2.462	.015*
	Male	97	17.0412	5.03719		
Amotivation	Female	54	9.9815	3.57397	-1.343	.182
	Male	97	10.8866	4.59591		

Table 3. Multiple comparison results of data according to disability status

Disability Status		N	x	Sd	F	p	LSD
Intrinsic Motivation	A Physical	45	47.8000	11.96700	3.446	.018*	C> B-D
	B Blind	36	43.8611	10.58882			
	C Deaf	50	49.7000	7.37411			
	D Mentally	20	42.8000	11.92344			
Extrinsic Motivation	A Physical	45	18.6000	5.10526	6.048	.001*	A-B-C> D
	B Blind	36	17.0278	3.45159			
	C Deaf	50	18.9400	4.93802			
	D Mentally	20	14.1500	4.17102			
Amotivation	A Physical	45	9.2444	3.66901	3.218	.025*	C> A
	B Blind	36	10.6111	3.44987			
	C Deaf	50	11.8800	5.28625			
	D Mentally	20	10.1500	3.13344			

Table 4. Comparison results of data according to nationality variable

National Sportsmanship		N	x	Sd	t	p
Intrinsic Motivation	Yes	59	47.9322	11.65431	1.031	.304
	No	92	46.1196	9.77308		
Extrinsic Motivation	Yes	59	19.6780	4.41565	4.156	.001*
	No	92	16.5109	4.66338		
Amotivation	Yes	59	11.1525	4.97169	1.282	.203
	No	92	10.1848	3.72968		

Table 5. Comparison results of the data according to the type of sport practiced

Type of Sport		N	x	Sd	t	p
Intrinsic Motivation	Individual	98	48.0714	11.37210	2.170	.032*
	Team	53	44.5283	8.44804		
Extrinsic Motivation	Individual	98	18.7857	4.83170	3.758	.001*
	Team	53	15.8302	4.17288		
Amotivation	Individual	98	10.3061	4.25576	-1.005	.316
	Team	53	11.0377	4.29204		

Table 6. Multiple comparison results according to individuals' years of sport

Year of Sportsmanship		N	x	Sd	F	p
Intrinsic Motivation	1-3 Years	22	42.0455	10.43108	2.419	.069
	3-6 Years	36	47.7500	8.63010		
	6-9 Years	39	49.3077	9.14835		
	9 Years and Over	54	46.3704	12.15512		
Extrinsic Motivation	1-3 Years	22	16.2273	5.28188	1.411	.242
	3-6 Years	36	17.3056	4.88039		
	6-9 Years	39	18.7179	4.33437		
	9 Years and Over	54	17.9630	4.83682		
Amotivation	1-3 Years	22	9.9091	3.68923	1.466	.226
	3-6 Years	36	11.7222	3.89587		
	6-9 Years	39	10.7179	4.57078		
	9 Years and Over	54	9.9444	4.43578		

Table 7. Comparison results regarding the social status of sports

Sportsmanship	Social Status	N	x	Sd	t	p
Intrinsic Motivation	Yes	128	47.4375	10.90167	1.686	.094
	No	23	43.4348	7.63262		
Extrinsic Motivation	Yes	128	18.1094	4.76740	2.204	.029*
	No	23	15.7391	4.64384		
Amotivation	Yes	128	10.2969	4.29495	-1.821	.071
	No	23	12.0435	3.87859		

and demotivation. Therefore, it can be said that as intrinsic motivation increases, extrinsic motivation will also increase, and as intrinsic motivation decreases, extrinsic motivation will decrease. Additionally, it is observed that as intrinsic motivation increases, demotivation decreases. No significant relationship was found between extrinsic motivation and demotivation.

Discussion

The research on the participation motivations of disabled athletes included 59 national and 92 non-national athletes. Among them, 22 individuals reported engaging in sports for «1-3 years», 36 for «3-6 years», 39 for «6-9 years», and 54 for «9 years and above». Analysis of the data revealed

Table 8. The relationship between the sub-dimensions of the motivation to participate in sport scale

Sportsmanship		Intrinsic Motivation	Extrinsic Motivation	Amotivation
Intrinsic Motivation	r	1	.629	-.238
	p		.001*	.003*
Extrinsic Motivation	r	.629	1	-.028
	p	.001*		.735
Amotivation	r	-.238	-.028	1
	p	.003*	.735	

p<0.05

significant differences in several variables. In the gender-based comparison, significant differences were noted between female and male participants. Previous studies corroborate our findings. Moradi et al. [17] found higher levels of participation motivation in females compared to males. Similarly, another study examining gender differences in the participation motivation of disabled athletes also reported significant gender-based differences, favoring females [18]. While these findings align with our research, diverse outcomes have also been documented

Abdullah et al. [19] reported no significant difference in gender in their study investigating reasons for sports participation among disabled individuals. Similarly, in the study by Abdullah and colleagues [20] on the motivation of hearing-impaired individuals to participate in physical activities, gender did not show a significant difference. Another study examining participation motivations of disabled individuals in sports also found no significant gender difference [21].

Significant differences in internal motivation, external motivation, and amotivation dimensions based on types of disabilities were observed in this study [22]. Another study [22] evaluating participation among disabled individuals in physical activities found significant differences between those engaged in sports and those who were not, particularly favoring sports engagement among individuals with physical, visual, and hearing impairments. Similarly, in a study on disabled athletes [21], significant differences were noted based on types of disabilities, with individuals with physical disabilities exhibiting higher amotivation scores compared to those with visual and hearing impairments. These findings suggest that guiding disabled individuals towards suitable sports activities may help address motivation issues [21]. Accordingly, individuals with physical disabilities had higher levels of amotivation compared to individuals with visual impairments. It can be considered that addressing the motivation problem in disabled individuals can be resolved by directing them to suitable sports branches.

The social status acquired through sports can significantly influence an individual's position and perception in society. Factors such as the level of involvement, intensity, professional status, and national recognition in sports can directly impact one's social standing, reputation, and self-assurance. In this study, it was observed that individuals who are national athletes exhibit higher levels of external motivation compared to non-national athletes.

Polat et al. [23] investigated the relationship between motivation and sports participation frequency, revealing significant differences in both internal and external motivation dimensions. Their findings indicated that competitive athletes had higher average values compared to recreational sports participants. Similarly, Top and Akıl [24] identified significant disparities between elite and non-elite athletes. Their study concluded that elite athletes exhibited higher average values in individual, environmental, and causality factors compared to non-elite athletes. Furthermore, Mutlu et al. [21] explored participation motivations based on national athlete status, finding that individuals who are national athletes showed higher values in the internal motivation dimension than those who are not. In a separate study focusing on participation motivations among disabled individuals according to national athlete status, significant differences were detected in the external motivation dimension among disabled individuals who are national athletes [18]. Karakoç et al. [25] examined the self-esteem of deaf national athletes in their study and found significant results in favor of national athletes.

Undoubtedly, sports provide significant benefits to human life. Extensively researched for its proven efficacy in addressing challenges, building self-confidence, and fostering a solution-oriented mindset, sports influence various psychological factors.

Table 5 presents the analysis results concerning the types of sports practiced by disabled individuals. Individuals participating in individual sports exhibit higher levels of internal and external motivation compared to those engaged in team sports. These findings are supported by Moradi et al. [17], who

similarly found significantly higher average values among individuals involved in individual sports compared to team sports.

Yaşar [26] identified significant differences in motivational factors among various sports branches. Particularly, individuals in badminton scored higher in showing strength compared to football and basketball. Differences were also noted in the approach to success, where badminton players significantly differed from basketball, volleyball, and football players. Additionally, variations were observed in the avoidance of failure, particularly between badminton and basketball players. Further disparities were found between individuals in individual sports like weightlifting, shooting, and swimming, and those in basketball.

Tekkurşun and İlhan [27] found significant differences in the branch variable while studying the participation motivations of visually impaired athletes, with higher average values for individuals interested in judo compared to weightlifting regarding internal motivation. Moreover, they noted that individuals involved in judo significantly differed from those in goalball in terms of external motivation. In their study, Tekkurşun and İlhan [27] examined the participation motivations of disabled individuals and found that those with physical disabilities who engaged in individual sports exhibited higher levels of internal motivation compared to those who were visually or hearing impaired. Additionally, the external motivation levels of visually impaired individuals participating in individual sports significantly differed from those with physical and hearing impairments.

Sirin et al. [28] identified significant differences in the competition factor among high school students participating in sports, based on the branch variable. Notably, significant disparities were observed in the friend dimension between volleyball and basketball, as well as between football and basketball branches. In contrast, a study investigating the participation motivations of individuals with physical disabilities [29] found no significant difference in the branch variable.

The heightened levels of internal and external motivation seen in individuals participating in individual sports can be attributed to their heightened self-awareness of their motivations. In team sports, failures or challenges may be tolerated by other teammates, whereas in individual sports, success and failure rest solely on the athlete's shoulders. Consequently, internal motivation assumes greater significance in individual sports, as individuals equip themselves with the necessary tools to navigate challenges effectively.

The physical and physiological transformations resulting from sports participation are often acknowledged and praised by one's peers, further boosting internal motivation. Additionally, external praise for individual achievements directly bolsters internal motivation. Therefore, the development of internal motivation can foster external motivation, and vice versa, creating a mutually reinforcing cycle.

Development, characterized by psychological and physiological changes over time, plays a pivotal role in individuals' success in sports, often emerging from consistent effort. In this study, the sportsmanship periods of individuals were examined and are presented in Table 6. The results reveal that there was no statistically significant difference in the sports participation periods among individuals.

Mutlu et al. [21] discovered a low-level positive correlation between the years of sports participation and levels of amotivation. Additionally, Yaşar [26] identified significant differences in years of experience among disabled individuals, noting that individuals engaging in sports for 13 years and above exhibited very low levels of avoidance of failure motivation. Furthermore, Tekkurşun and İlhan [27] examined the relationship between years of sports participation and motivation levels among visually impaired individuals, revealing a high-level positive correlation between years of sports and levels of internal, external, and amotivation. As individuals' years of sports experience increased, their motivation levels also increased. However, in another study investigating this relationship, no significant differences were found [30].

Individuals with different social roles gain a certain place in society based on the respect they show to others and the respect they receive from others. This place that individuals occupy over time grants them a status. When analyzing the results, it is observed that those who answer «yes» to the question of whether sports bring social status have higher levels of external motivation compared to those who answer «no». However, upon examining the research in the literature, no study specifically addressing whether sports provide social status to individuals was found. Therefore, studies related to sports were examined, and it was observed the following facts

Ahmed et al. [31] «participation motivation scale» was used, and this scale includes the sub-dimensions of the «social status» factor. A significant difference was found in the gender factor within the social status sub-dimension. It was determined that female participants significantly differed from male participants.

Due to the lack of research in the literature regarding the social status of sports, the variable of «providing social status through sports» gains significant value for future studies to be pioneers. Furthermore, when examining the research findings, a positive significant relationship between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation is observed. However, a negative significant relationship between demotivation and intrinsic motivation

was determined. As a result, it can be predicted that the feeling of demotivation that may arise due to individuals being able to self-motivate will decrease. Additionally, it can be said that positive opinions from one's environment can also increase intrinsic motivation. Therefore, it can be concluded that being motivated internally and externally has a significant impact in the face of feelings of demotivation.

Conclusions

In summary, sports offer numerous positive benefits to individuals, including both internal and external motivation, particularly impactful for those with disabilities. These activities foster self-expression and self-sufficiency across various age groups and skill levels. Notably, individuals competing at the national athlete level exhibit high external motivation, while those involved in individual sports demonstrate elevated internal and external motivation, underscoring the importance of sports engagement. Furthermore, participation in sports not only yields physiological advantages but also enhances psychological and sociological well-being, as evidenced by higher motivation levels among those attributing social status to sports. Encouraging participation in sports among people with disabilities can foster holistic development encompassing physiological, psychological, and sociological aspects, while bolstering internal and external motivation may mitigate levels of amotivation.

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