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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Determination of Situational Self-Criticism Levels of Athletes Engaged in Struggle Sports

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**Abstract**
The aim of this study is to determine the situational self-criticism levels of struggle athletes. The research was designed in cross-sectional survey model, one of the quantitative research methods. The population of the study consists of individuals who do combat sports in Yalova province. The sample consisted of a total of 202 athletes, 97 females and 105 males, who voluntarily accepted to participate in the study among the athletes constituting the universe. Athlete Situational Self-Criticism Scale consisting of 7 items was used as a data collection tool in the study. Statistical analyses in the study were performed using SPSS package programme. A significant difference was found between the participants according to nationality, age, sport age, education and branch variables p<0,05. As a result, it was determined that there was no difference between the situational self-criticism levels of the athletes in terms of gender and parental marital status variables. It was determined that there was a significant difference between the situational self-criticism levels of the athletes in terms of nationality, sports age, age, education and branch variables.

**Keywords**
Sports, Struggle, Self-criticism

## INTRODUCTION

Self-criticism in sport competitions is a self-evaluation process in which individuals evaluate themselves, their personality traits, their physical condition or their performance in various situations by judging them negatively (Holle and Ingram, 2008; Powers et al., 2004). When the literature is examined, it is seen that self-criticism is also expressed as the individual's awareness of his/her faulty behaviours, making an objective evaluation and paying attention not to repeat these faulty behaviours (Uludağ, 2011; Turşak, 2017). In addition, self-criticism is explained as the individual behaving according to his/her own high standards and showing hostility to himself/herself when these high standards are not met (Shahar, 2015).

Individuals with high perfectionism tend to set high standards for perfection and good performance and overcriticise their behaviours (Flett and Hewitt, 2002; Frost et al, 1990). Therefore, high perfectionistic individuals with very high standards are more vulnerable to failure in targeted performance than low perfectionistic individuals because they are also overly self-critical (Anshel and Mansouri, 2005; Besser and et al., 2004).

Conceptually, self-criticism is based on unrealistic self-expectations as well as maladaptive thought patterns. Instead of promoting sport performance, it is seen to cause self-directed perfectionism, anxiety, and even sport burnout, which can negatively affect sport performance (Kowalski and Duckham, 2014).

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It can be said that the increase in the level of self-criticism brings negativities such as difficulties in progressing to the targeted goal, anxiety, and depressive state (Oliveira and et al., 2021; Powers and et al., 2009; Kowalski and Duckham, 2014). These negativities may cause negative effects on the performance of elite level athletes. Anxiety and depressive states seen in the athlete is a situation that coaches and athletes do not want to encounter, as it will cause a decrease in sports performance. In this context, the aim of the study was to determine the situational self-criticism levels of combat athletes.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

***Research Model***

Cross-sectional survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, was used. Cross-sectional survey design is a type of study that aims to describe a situation that has existed for a long time and exists today as it is (Karasar, 2004).

***Research Group***

The population of the study consists of individuals who do combat sports in Yalova province. The sample consisted of a total of 202 athletes, 97 females and 105 males, who voluntarily accepted to participate in the study among the athletes constituting the universe.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics results of the participants

| **Variable** | | **f** | **%** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 105 | 52 |
| | Female | 97 | 48 |
| Age | Between the Ages of 15 and 17 | 120 | 59,4 |
| | Between the Ages of 18 and 21 | 33 | 16,3 |
| | 22 years and over | 49 | 24,3 |
| Sports Branch | Taekwondo | 22 | 48,5 |
| | Boxing | 21 | 10,4 |
| | Wrestle | 22 | 10,9 |
| | Judo | 24 | 11,9 |
| | Karate | 18 | 8,9 |
| | Wushu | 19 | 9,4 |
| National Athlete | Yes | 64 | 31,7 |
| | No | 138 | 68,3 |
| Sports Age | 1-3 Years | 89 | 44,1 |
| | 4-6 Years | 29 | 13,9 |
| | 7-9 Years | 24 | 11,9 |
| | 10 years and over | 61 | 30,2 |
| Education | High School | 136 | 67,3 |
| | Undergraduate | 56 | 27,7 |
| | Postgraduate | 10 | 5 |
| Marital status of parents | Married | 183 | 90,6 |
| | Separated | 19 | 9,4 |
| **Total** | | **202** | **100** |

When Table 1 is analysed, 52% of the participants were male and 48% were female, 59-4% were 15-17 years old, 16.3% were 18-21 years old and 42.3% were 22 years old and above, 48,5% of them are taekwondo, 10,4% boxing, 10,9% wrestling, 11,9% judo, 8,9% karate, 9,4% wushu, 31,7% are national athletes, 68,3% of the participants were not national athletes, 44,1% had been doing sports for 1-3 years, 13,9% for 4-6 years, 11,9% for 7-9 years and 30,2% for 10 years

or more, 67,3% had high school education, 27,7% had undergraduate education, 5% had graduate education, 90,6% of the participants' parents were married and 9,4% were divorced.

***Research Ethics***

Ethics committee approval was received for this study from Süleyman Demirel University Faculty of Medicine Clinical Research Ethics Committee (E- 87432956-050.99-299639, Date:06.07.2022). Participant provided informed consent, with the volunteer form covering research details, risks, benefits, confidentiality, and participant rights. The research strictly adhered to the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, prioritizing participant's rights and well-being in design, procedures, and confidentiality measures.

***Data Collection Tool***

As a data collection tool, the Athlete Situational Self-Criticism Scale (SSAS) consisting of 7 items was used. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .782. Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) coefficient was found to be .70 (Tingaz, 2021).

Structural validity analysis was also conducted for this study. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value obtained was found to be ,702. This result shows that the scale is valid for the study sample group.

***Analysis of the Data***

When the normality analysis of the data was performed, it was found that the values were within the range of ±1.5 points. Since the result obtained is within the score range accepted as normal value, it can be said that the data show normal distribution (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). Independent Samples T-Test was used for pairwise comparison between groups and One-Way Anova test was used for multiple comparisons. Bonferroni test was applied to determine between which variables there was a difference between multiple comparison results. The results of the analyses were evaluated at 0.05 significance level.

**Table 2.** Normality test analysis results

| ASSCS | | Items | N | X̄ | Ss | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Single Factor | ASSCS Total Score | 7 | 202 | 31,57 | 14,37 | ,130 | -,757 |

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the skewness value is ,130 and the kurtosis value is -,757. If the data are within ±1.5 points, it can be said that the data are normally distributed (Tabachnik, Fidell, 2013). Since the study data are within the specified score values, it can be said that they are normally distributed.

## RESULTS

**Table 3**. The results of the analyses according to the gender of the participants

| | Gender | n | X̄ | Ss | t | df | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ASSCS Total Score | Male | 105 | 33,30 | 13,12 | 1,785 | 200 | ,076 |
| | Female | 97 | 29,70 | 15,48 | | | |

p>0,05

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the athlete status self-criticism total score results according to the gender variable (p>0,05).

**Table 4.** The results of the analyses according to the national athlete variable of the participants

| | National Ahlete | n | X̄ | Ss | t | df | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ASSCS Total Score | Yes | 64 | 37,58 | 10,39 | 4,211 | 200 | ,000 |
| | No | 138 | 28,70 | 15,13 | | | |

p>0,05

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the total score results of athlete status self-criticism according to the national athletes variable (p<0,05). It was observed that national athletes made more self-criticism.

**Table 5.** The results of the analyses according to the marital status of the participants' parents

| | Marital status of parents | n | X̄ | Ss | t | df | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ASSCS Total Score | Married | 64 | 31,74 | 13,87 | ,533 | 200 | ,595 |
| | Separated | 138 | 28,89 | 18,94 | | | |

p>0,05

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the athlete state self-criticism total score results according to the parental relationship status variable (p<0,05).

**Table 6.** The results of the analyses according to the sport age of the participants

| | Sport Age | n | X̄ | Ss | F | p | Bonferroni |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ASSCS Total Score | [a1]-3 Years | 89 | 24,97 | 13,08 | 23,647 | ,000* | a<c<br>a <d<br>b <c<br>a<d |
| | [b]4-6 Years | 28 | 26,39 | 13,15 | | | |
| | [c]7-9 Years | 24 | 40,79 | 14,17 | | | |
| | [d]10 Years and over | 61 | 39,95 | 10,20 | | | |

p<0,05

When Table 6 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the athletes' state self-criticism total score results according to the sports age variable of the participants (p<0,05). According to the results obtained, it was determined that those with more years of sportsmanship had higher self-criticism than those with less years of sportsmanship.

**Table 7.** The results of the analyses according to the age variable of the participants

| | Age | n | X̄ | Ss | F | p | Bonferroni |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ASSCS Total Score | [a]15-18 Years | 120 | 27,07 | 14,76 | 17,454 | ,000* | a<b<br>a<c |
| | [b]18-21 Years | 33 | 40,09 | 10,43 | | | |
| | [c]21 Years and Over | 49 | 36,86 | 11,12 | | | |

p<0,05

When Table 7 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the athletes' state self-criticism total score results according to the age variable of the participants (p<0,05). According to the results obtained, it was determined that older athletes were more likely to make self-criticism.

**Table 8.** The results of the analyses according to the education variable of the participants

| | Education | n | X̄ | Ss | F | p | Bonferroni |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ASSCS Total Score | [a]High School | 136 | 28,04 | 14,91 | 14,255 | ,000* | a<b<br>a<c |
| | [b]Undergraduate | 56 | 38,54 | 10,07 | | | |
| | [c]Postgraduate | 10 | 40,50 | 9,06 | | | |

p<0,05

When Table 8 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the athletes' state self-criticism total score results according to the sports age variable of the participants (p<0,05). According to the results of the analysis, it was determined that the self-criticism levels of those with undergraduate and graduate education levels were higher.

**Table 9.** The results of the analyses according to the branch variable of the participants

| | Branch | n | X̄ | Ss | F | p | Bonferroni |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ASSCS Total Score | [a]Taekwondo | 98 | 28,69 | 14,78 | 3,549 | ,002* | a<d<br>a<e<br>a<f<br>b<d<br>b<e<br>b<f |
| | [b]Boxing | 21 | 26,38 | 16,81 | | | |
| | [c]Wrestle | 22 | 33,64 | 11,25 | | | |
| | [d]Judo | 24 | 37,79 | 9,91 | | | |
| | [e]Karate | 18 | 37,44 | 14,38 | | | |
| | [f]Wushu | 19 | 36,32 | 12,50 | | | |

p<0,05

When Table 9 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the athletes' state self-criticism total score results according to the sports branch variable of the participants (p<0,05). According to the results of the analyses, it was determined that Taekwondo and Boxing athletes were more self-critical than athletes in other branches.

## DISCUSSION

Although the self-criticism level of male athletes (X=33,36) was higher compared to female athletes (X=29,70) according to the gender variable, when the ASSCS scale total score averages were examined, no statistically significant difference was found (p>0,05). In relation to this situation, it can be said that the self-critical situation of the individual is not a gender-related situation, it can be caused by the physical and psychological states that the individual is in. As a result of the study conducted by Adam et al., (2022) it was found that while the self-criticism levels of female athletes were low at the beginning of the season, their self-criticism levels were high at the end of the season. In the study conducted by Killham et al. (2018), no significant difference was found between self-criticism scores in terms of gender. In a study conducted by Bingöl and Alpkaya (2016), in which the self-esteem levels of high school students who do sports and those who do not do sports are compared, it was determined that when male and female students who do sports are evaluated among themselves according to gender, there is a statistically significant difference between those who do sports and those who do not do sports (p>0,05). It can be said that the fact that parents are married or separated does not have any effect on the self-criticism levels of athletes. There has not been a study in the literature about self-criticism and parents' relationship status.

When the ASSCS scale total score averages were examined, it was found that national athletes (X=37.58) had higher self-criticism levels compared to non-national athletes (X=28.70) according to the nationality variable, and statistically significant results were found. (p<0,05). According to Vural et al., (2019) in their studies conducted on the examination of self-esteem and decision-making styles of national athletes at the high school level in decision-making, it was found that the level of self-esteem of decision-making athletes participating in the study according to the sports branch variable differed significantly in terms of sports branch. In the study by Walton et al., (2020) contrary to expectation, the results suggest that even highly elite athletes may be open to using self-compassion.

When the total score averages of the ASSCS scale were examined, it was seen that the level of self-criticism increased as experience increased according to the sports age variable (1-3 years X=24.97, 4-6 years X=26.39, 7-9 years X=40.79, 10 years and above X=39.95), while statistically significant differences were found. (p<0,05). It can be said that this situation is related to the fact that as the experience increases, the person becomes more perfectionist and sharper in the self-evaluation process. In a study conducted by Frost et al., (1990) they found that individuals with high perfectionism also showed high levels of self-criticism (Frost and et al., 1990). In a study in which Şenel et al., examined the relationship between the self-compassion and self-criticism levels of volleyball players, they found that the self-criticism levels of athletes with a high year of

playing sports also increased (Şenel et al., 2023). According to Vural et al., (2019) in their conducted on the examination of self-esteem and decision-making styles of national athletes at the high school level in decision-making, they reached the conclusion that the athletes participating in the study differed significantly according to the age of sports in their comparisons according to the year of playing sports (Vural et al., 2019).

Looking at the total score averages of the ASSCS scale, it was found that the level of self-criticism also increased with increasing age according to the age variable (15-17 years X=27.07; 18-21 years X=40.09; 22 years and over X=36.86), while a statistically significant difference was found (p<0,05). It can be said that the level of self-criticism, especially between the ages of 18 and 21, is high because athletes evaluate themselves more sharply towards the end of their adolescence and evaluate their defeats and successes in competitions more consciously and goal-oriented. In parallel with the results of our study, Şenel and his colleagues found that the higher the age of athletes, the higher their self-criticism levels (Şenel et al., 2023).

When the ASSCS scale total score averages are examined, it is seen that the level of self-criticism increases as the education level increases according to the education variable (High school X=28.04; Undergraduate X=38.54; Graduate X=40.50), while a statistically significant difference was found (p<0,05). No study has been found in the literature regarding the level of state self-criticism and educational status. When the total score averages of the ASSCS scale were examined, statistically significant differences were found in the level of self-criticism according to the branch variable (taekwondo X=28.69; boxing X=26.38; wrestling X=33.64; judo X=37.79; karate X=37.44; wushu X=36.32) (p<0.05). This situation can be explained by the fact that the number of participants is not evenly distributed among branches. When the relevant literature was scanned, no studies related to situational self-criticism and sports branches were found.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

As a result, it can be said that gender and parental relationship status variables did not affect the participants' status self-criticism levels. It can be said that national sportsmanship, sports age, age, education and branch variables affect the participants' status self-criticism levels.

studies

It is thought that the study we have done will contribute to new studies to be conducted in the related field. New research to be conducted may reveal different results with larger sample groups.

## Conflict of Interest

There are no personal or financial conflicts of interest among the authors regarding the scope of the study.

## Authors' Contribution

Study Design, HA, ÖG; Data Collection, HA, ÖG; Statistical Analysis, HA, ÖG; Data Interpretation, HA, ÖG; Manuscript Preparation, HA, ÖG; Literature Search, HA, ÖG. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Research Ethic Information

Ethics committee approval was received for this study from Süleyman Demirel University Faculty of Medicine Clinical Research Ethics Committee (E- 87432956-050.99-299639, Date:06.07.2022).

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