



Self-Handicapping and Its Value in Sports

Yetkin Utku KAMUK^{1A}

¹Hitit University, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Coaching Department

Address Correspondence to YU, Kamuk: e-mail: yetkinkamuk@hitit.edu.tr

(Received): 05/08/2021/ (Accepted): 18.06.2022

A:Orcid ID: 0000-0001-5976-7503

Abstract

Self-handicapping can be defined as an effort to voluntarily create excuses that an individual can use in case of a potential failure. Self-handicapping behavior, which can be manifested either behaviorally or verbally, helps protect the self-esteem of the individual in the short term but causes psychological/social problems if used frequently. Studies on self-handicapping in the literature are generally concentrated in the academic field. The method used in this study was reviewing the original articles related to the topic of self-handicapping and sports. There are frequent studies on self-handicapping levels of academic staff, students, and teachers. This study was carried out to examine the studies on self-handicapping in the field of sports. The number of studies in the field of sports is limited. In studies investigating which variables were affected by self-handicapping, it was seen that sociodemographic variables did not affect the level of self-handicapping, but there was a controversy in the gender variable because there were conflicting results regarding the effect of gender on self-handicapping levels. There were also studies reporting that self-handicapping was associated with self-esteem and examined it. It was reported that self-esteem had a negative correlation with self-handicapping, and individuals with high self-esteem tended to have low self-handicapping behavior. In sports performances, the value attributed by the individual to this performance (competition or performance test) affected the self-handicapping tendency of the athlete. As the importance of performance increased, the tendency of athletes to self-handicapping also increased. In team sports, athletes' tendency to claimed self-handicapping behavior may lead to negative consequences such as the exclusion of athletes from the team. It was concluded that the studies on self-handicapping in sports focused on athletes and referees, but there were no studies investigating the self-handicapping tendencies of coaches. Studies on disabled athletes were limited. It was considered that increasing the number of studies conducted in the field of sports, especially on disabled athletes and trainers, would fill the gap in this field.

Keywords: Athlete, self-handicapping, self-esteem, excuse, failure

Özet

Kendini sabotaj, bireyin potansiyel başarısızlık durumunda kullanabileceği mazeretleri önceden planlı olarak yaratma çabası olarak tanımlanabilir. Davranışsal ya da sözel olarak iki şekilde ortaya çıkabilen kendini sabotaj davranışı, kısa süreli kullanımda bireyin benlik saygısını korumaya yardımcı olurken, sık kullanımı halinde psikolojik ve sosyal sorunlara yol açmaktadır. Literatürde kendini sabotaj ile ilgili çalışmalar genellikle akademik alanda yoğunlaşmıştır. Akademik personelin, öğrencilerin ve öğretmenlerin kendini sabotaj düzeylerinin incelendiği çalışmalara sıklıkla rastlanılmıştır. Ancak, bu çalışma, spor alanında kendini sabotaj konusunda yapılan çalışmaların incelenmesi amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmada kullanılan yöntem, kendini sabotaj ve spor konusundaki makalelerin tasnif edilerek incelenmesidir. Literatürde spor alanında yapılan araştırma sayısının çok fazla olmadığı görülmüştür. Kendini sabotajın hangi değişkenlerden etkilendiğinin araştırıldığı çalışmalarda, sosyodemografik değişkenlerin kendini sabotaj düzeyini etkilemediği, cinsiyet faktörünün etkisi hakkında ise uzlaşmış bir karar olmadığı görülmüştür. Cinsiyetin kendini sabotaj düzeyine etkisi ile ilgili çelişkili bulgular mevcuttur. Kendini sabotaj ve benlik saygısı arasında ilişki olduğunu bildiren ve bunu incelemiş olan çalışmalar da mevcuttur. Benlik saygısının kendini sabotaj ile negatif korelasyona sahip olduğu, benlik saygısı yüksek olan bireylerin kendini sabotaj davranışına yöneliminin düşük olduğu bildirilmektedir. Spor alanındaki performanslarda, bireyin bu performansa (müsabaka ya da performans testi) atfettiği değer, sporunun kendini sabotaj eğilimini etkilemektedir. Performansın önemi arttıkça, sporcuların kendini sabotaj eğilimi de artmaktadır. Takım sporlarında sporcuların sözel kendini sabotaj davranışına yönelmesi, sporcuların takımdan dışlanması gibi olumsuz sonuçları ortaya çıkartabilmektedir. Yapılan literatür taraması sonucunda, spor alanında yapılan kendini sabotajla ilgili çalışmaların sporcular ve hakemler üzerinde yoğunlaştığı görülmüş ancak antrenörlerin kendini sabotaj eğilimlerinin araştırıldığı herhangi bir çalışmaya rastlanılmamıştır. Engelli sporcular üzerinde yapılan çalışmalar ise yeterli sayıda değildir. Spor alanında, özellikle engelli sporcular ve antrenörler üzerinde, yapılan çalışmaların sayısının artırılmasının, bu alandaki boşluğu dolduracağı değerlendirilmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sporcu, kendini sabotaj, benlik saygısı, mazeret, başarısızlık

INTRODUCTION

At the very top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization is located and it means that individuals are in need of self-actualization after their physiological, safety, love/belonging, and esteem needs are met (40). Self-actualization may be exhibited in different fields such as science, art, music, and sport (60). Sport is a phenomenon in which self-actualization is the main goal (74) and that goal is achieved by beating the opponent(s) through physical performance. Although it seems that sport covers only athletes, it also includes other aspects such as referees, coaches, and managers. An athlete's goal is to win the game while the referee's goal is to officiate the game flawlessly, and the coach and/or the manager wants the team to be the champion. It may seem that the goals of these stakeholders differ from each other, but the common goal here is "to be successful" and achieve self-actualization through this success.

In today's success-oriented world, the quality of individuals' performances has a great deal of impact on their feelings. Meeting the need for success satisfies individuals' feelings such as self-esteem, self-worth, and self-actualization (11). Success sprouts the feelings such as competence, pride, self-confidence, and happiness, while failure leads to feelings like incompetence, grief, weakness, embarrassment, and impaired self-esteem. The fact that the results of performance have such strong effects may affect the behaviors of the individuals who want to protect themselves from these possible negative emotions (20). In other words, an individual, who makes an effort to achieve success but realizes the possibility of being faced with the feeling of "inadequacy" in case of failure, may reduce the effort to be successful and try to protect his self-esteem by thinking that the possible failure is not caused by himself (86). Failure or defeat leads to a state of anxiety that individuals will be perceived as inadequate by others, and that feeling causes individuals to tend towards behaviors to protect their self-esteem. These behaviors aim to externalize the cause(s) of failure and try to protect self-esteem (13).

Internal and/or external obstacles that individuals may encounter while trying to reach their goals raise the possibility of negative experience(s). When an individual perceives the possible failure in performance as a threat to himself, he may tend to create the conditions that will cause his performance to decrease voluntarily (51). An athlete, who has an

important game the next morning, may prune a tree instead of preparing for the game. The main reason for this behavior is the voluntary effort to create an excuse and to be able to say that he has to work in the garden the day before if the game fails. On the other hand, if he wins the game, he will think that he is talented enough that he does not have to prepare for the game. Either way, he will protect his self-esteem. Any attempt to create a pseudo-excuse that will decrease the chance of success, and use it as the reason for the potential failure will satisfy his needs in case of failure, it will also be useful in case of success. No matter what the result of the game is, the athlete will use its benefit (5). The athlete, in fact, self-handicapped himself by pruning the trees but not preparing for the game (47).

The current study was a review and its purpose is to summarize previously published studies related to 'the self-handicapping and sports' topic. The articles to be reviewed were elected by using a specific set of keywords and searching the original articles by using the keywords on DergiPark (provided by Tubitak ULAKBIM) and Google Scholar databases. The keywords used were set as self-handicapping (kendini sabotaj), fear of failure (başarısızlık korkusu), sports (spor), competition (müsabaka) and self-esteem (benlik saygısı). Turkish keywords were used in searching on DergiPark and English keywords were used for Google Scholar searches. The lists were exported to Excel and alphabetically listed by the titles. The results were then refined by removing the titles repeated more than once. The refined list was reviewed again to evaluate the articles to find out if they were appropriate and fall within the scope of the current study. The final list of articles was then taken into consideration and the study was conducted by reviewing them.

Self-handicapping

The term self-handicapping was first introduced into the literature by Jones and Berglas (41) and it was defined in many different ways, but as a general view, self-handicapping is "the voluntary effort to produce a planned excuse prior to a potential failure to protect self-esteem" (16, 51, 76). This strategy enables the internalization of the success and externalization of the failure (1). Since the idea of failing a task causes high levels of stress for individuals, individuals sometimes think that they will be able to preserve their sense of self-efficacy by creating excuses that reduce their likelihood of

success and by using these excuses as a protective shield (5). Self-handicapping, indeed, is not an effort to fail, the aim of self-handicapping is to will to externalize the potential failure if failure is perceived as important. However, self-handicapping, itself, deteriorates individuals' performances and makes it harder to be successful (15). Externalization of failure is important because if an individual can do this, he admits his failure without any hesitation (41).

Self-handicapping is used primarily to protect self-esteem but it may be used to manipulate others' perceptions (35, 84). While individuals use self-handicapping to cover their failure and protect self-esteem, they also try to create the delusion that they are competent (33). Self-handicapping can be either behavioral or claimed (or verbal) (18), so, self-handicapping attempts are examined under these two subheadings (19). Even though they may look different from each other, the common goal of these strategies is to protect the individual's self-efficacy and self-esteem (37).

Behavioral Self-handicapping

It is the behavior performed to affect the success of the future performance directly. This strategy is often preferred by individuals when the importance of success is high. The individual tries to protect himself from the negative effects of failure by creating reasons that will increase the probability of failure (23). For this purpose, individuals may tend to exhibit observable negative behaviors such as postponing work, spending time on non-work-related activities, and alcohol use in order to make it difficult for the current situation or the task that is expected to be done. For example; instead of striving for success, the individual may exhibit behaviors that do not help the performance to be performed, such as going fishing or shopping (37, 77, 91). In behavioral self-handicapping, the excuses that may be the reasons for a possible failure are produced voluntarily before the task is performed. In fact, the individual complicates the task with his very own efforts, because the tendency for that kind of behavior will be much more effective in persuading those who will evaluate the level of success in the performance. Behavioral self-handicapping has an effect that greatly reduces the likelihood of success (5). Here, the individual strives not to ensure failure, but to externalize it in case of a possible failure. However, this effort causes an emotional impasse because this behavior, which is applied to protect self-esteem, negatively affects the

success of the individual and damages the self-image (42).

Claimed Self-handicapping

In this type of self-handicapping, the individual verbally expresses that his failure was due to the factors that affect his performance, such as environment, equipment, atmosphere, etc. Individuals who use claimed self-handicapping are prone to state that their failures are based on some factors that they are unable to control such as illness or other feelings (e.g. stress, excitement, embarrassment), the others' incompetence (e.g. teammates), or the other environmental factors (e.g. insufficient lighting) (37, 75, 81). These are expected expressions that individuals can make as excuses in case of failure, but claimed self-handicapping is different from an ordinary excuse because the individual speaks negatively about the situation he is in, and blames the environmental factors before the performance, and the tricky point is, these are told intentionally to be heard by the people to whom the individual feels himself to be responsible (73). For example, a tennis player may tend to claimed self-handicapping by expressing that he has back pain because if he fails, he will be able to say that reason for the failure was the back pain, not his incompetence (28).

Tendency for Self-handicapping

As self-handicapping is a strategy to protect self-esteem in case of a potential threat (1), individuals with a low level of self-esteem are more prone to self-handicapping (26). It was shown earlier that people with a high level of self-esteem used self-handicapping less frequently (86). Individuals, who know that their performance will be evaluated by others, tend to self-handicapping a lot (73). Individuals, who are anxious that they will not be able to succeed in some of the tasks they have to do, may either postpone their tasks or tend to self-handicapping. Postponing tasks eliminates the possibility of a mistake as there is no performance and the individual is kept away from possible negative emotions. However, the danger is that using this strategy to alleviate anxiety may become a regular defensive tool that the individual uses frequently (23).

It has been reported that individuals with low self-esteem perceive the obstacles/difficulties they may encounter while performing tasks harder than others (63). Having low self-esteem is a factor that

increases the tendency to self-handicapping (85, 86). Perfectionist individuals' self-handicapping tendencies are also higher when compared to others (38, 70, 72). Perfectionists are generally not satisfied with their performance (52), have high-stress levels (50), and have higher fear of failure (29).

Effects of Self-handicapping

When self-handicapping strategies are used rarely, no negative effect on self-image is expected, but if used frequently, problems such as embarrassment, irritability, narcissistic personality disorder, defensive pessimism, deceitful behavior, long-lasting low-level psycho-social well-being, or burnout syndrome may be experienced (4, 17, 57, 70, 91). If self-handicapping behavior becomes a personality trait, a wide range of social problems, ranging from individual exclusion to social isolation (91, 92).

Associations between Self-Handicapping and Self-Esteem

Self-esteem, which is expressed as a positive or negative attitude of the individual toward himself and how he perceives himself (71), is a subjective evaluation of an individual for his emotions (26). The relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping is that self-handicapping behavior is used to protect self-esteem (82). Individuals want to feel that they are valuable (54), and high self-esteem levels cause the individual to perceive their self-worth as high (2). Therefore, individuals who want to maintain their self-esteem can use self-handicapping strategies whenever they feel the possibility of failure. However, there is no consensus regarding the relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping. Although some researchers suggest that there is a positive relationship (15, 25, 63, 83), evidence of a negative relationship has also been shown (31, 53, 66, 87). In a recent study, it was reported that the relationship between self-handicapping and self-esteem is meaningful only if the self-esteem level is below the average (61).

Self-handicapping in Sports

There are many studies on self-handicapping carried out on individuals in the field of education (teachers, students, academicians) (10, 26, 30, 61, 80, 86, 90), however, studies on self-handicapping in the field of sports are limited. In this section, the studies on self-handicapping in the field of sports will be compiled and the findings will be summarized.

Sports is an area of self-actualization for individuals (60) and in sports, they can try to satisfy their sense of self-worth. There are not only athletes but also coaches and referees in the field of sports. Even if these individuals of different statuses take part in the same sporting performance, their goals will be different: the athlete may want to break the record, the trainer may want to make the team a champion, and the referee to lead the match flawlessly. In sports competitions, which are success-oriented performances, regardless of their status, the aim of the athlete, coach, or referee is to show that he is successful (48). So, although performance goals are different, the common goal is to be successful.

The concept of self-handicapping can be examined as a state or trait phenomenon in sports. The trait self-handicapping approach examines whether the self-handicapping tendency has effects on psychological and behavioral variables depending on the sportive events (18). In some studies examining this approach, self-handicapping tendency was found to be negatively correlated to mood (64), perceptions about group harmony (14), time spent for preparatory training (68), and global self-esteem level (65).

In the 'state self-handicapping' approach, the factors just before the sportive performance of the individuals are examined. Studies conducted to examine this approach revealed that self-handicapping tendency is associated with the goal of avoiding performance (an avoidance goal focused on avoiding the demonstration of normative incompetence) (24) and low self-efficacy and low self-esteem (58).

Jones and Berglas (41) state that self-handicapping in the sports field can be seen in a wide range from the tennis player who tries to externalize his failure by straightening the strings of the racket after a bad hit, to the golf player who systematically avoids training by going out on the golf course. However, studies examining the self-handicapping tendencies and self-handicapping levels of individuals in the field of sports are limited. When the literature is searched, it has been observed that self-handicapping studies are generally focused on athletes, there are no studies on coaches, and the studies on referees are insufficient.

Rhodewalt et al. (68) found that swimmers with a low self-handicapping level tried hard to prepare better before an important competition, but those

with a high level of self-handicapping did not show this behavior, and these athletes went to their trainers and talked to them before all performances. Carron et al. (14), recruited a total of 221 athletes from five branches, namely rowing, cricket, water polo, and two different rugby branches in their study and it was reported that individual differences affected self-handicapping tendency, but a negative relationship was found between the harmony within the group and the level of self-handicapping. Hausenblas and Carron (34) stated that, in team sports, a high tendency to self-handicapping was not observed because self-handicapping behavior is clearly understood by the teammates, and the individuals were afraid of being excluded. Many studies have shown that the use of self-handicapping strategies can adversely affect the performance and social relations of athletes (24, 65, 69).

Coudeville et al. (18) investigated 71 competitor basketball players' behavioral and claimed self-handicapping levels in their study and concluded that male athletes' self-handicapping tendencies were higher and the frequency of self-handicapping increased as the level of cognitive anxiety increased. However, it is known that using self-handicapping strategies may benefit some athletes in the short term (9), but this benefit will lose its effect if used in the long term (67). A striking example of the detrimental effect of self-handicapping was reported by Berglas. It has been reported that the hockey player Derek Sanderson, following the transfer that earned him the title of the most paid sportsman of his time, started to drink continuously even though he had never drunk before and he did this with the anxiety of not being able to show the performance expected of him. This self-handicapping behavior negatively affected Sanderson's performance, causing him to become an unsuccessful athlete (12).

The importance of competition affects the tendency towards self-handicapping behavior. There is a positive correlation between the importance attributed to the competition and the level of self-handicapping. In the study conducted on elite golf players, it was found that those who define the competition as "highly important" had high self-handicapping levels, and the athletes who stated the importance of the competition as "low" had a low self-handicapping tendency (55).

As a result of their work with 546 athletes in the branches of basketball, soccer, American football, volleyball, rugby, cricket, athletics, taekwondo,

triathlon, orienteering, golf, swimming, water polo, gymnastics, tennis, netball, squash, shooting, archery, and field hockey, Prapavessis et al. (65) reported that athletes with high self-handicapping tendency chose emotion-centered coping strategies such as withdrawal and passive attitude and faced long-term low performance as the effect of self-handicapping.

Hofseth, Toering, and Jordet (39) reported that according to the results of their study on 589 young football players, embarrassment and guilt tendencies affected the emergence of self-handicapping behavior and as these feelings increased, the football players' tendency to self-handicapping also increased. It has also been found that those who were prone to feeling shame had a high self-handicapping tendency.

It has been shown previously by Gözmen Elmas and Aşçı (31) that fear of failure is the strongest predictor of athletes' tendency for self-handicapping. According to the results of the study carried out on 53 male judokas who have national rankings, it was determined that athletes with a high level of self-handicapping attributed the failure to external factors more and indicated that they had a minimal decrease in their perceived judo proficiency levels after the competitions they failed. Judokas with a low level of self-handicapping stated that the failure resulted from their very own performances and that their judo proficiency levels were not very good in those competitions (32). It has been shown that the tendency of athletes to self-handicapping was affected by their self-esteem level regardless of gender, and athletes with low self-esteem levels resorted to claimed self-handicapping more (28). It has been shown in many studies that self-handicapping tendency increased when athletes' abilities were revealed, such as competition or physical performance measurement, when the athlete was concerned about a possible negative evaluation due to his performance (16, 27, 32, 55, 58, 63).

Studies on disabled athletes are also very limited. In a study examining the self-handicapping levels of disabled swimmers (49), it was reported that the disability did not affect the self-handicapping tendency. However, there are also studies showing that disabled individuals have higher self-handicapping levels (6, 7, 59) but these studies were not conducted on athletes.

In general, the findings obtained from studies examining the self-handicapping levels of athletes are in accordance with the information in the literature. It is clear that, as the levels of success expected by the athletes increase, their self-handicapping levels increase, however, it is not possible to conclude that "all athletes will use self-handicapping strategies". Although there are internal factors that affect the self-handicapping behavior of athletes, external factors are also of high importance. In particular, it is obvious that athletes in team sports are less likely to tend to self-handicapping strategies compared to athletes in individual sports. It's because the athlete who will tend to self-handicapping will face social pressure that will be created by the other athletes on the team.

There are studies in the literature that examine the self-handicapping levels of not only athletes but also referees who act in the field of sports. The search on international studies examining the self-handicapping levels of the referees returned no results. It was seen that there was only one study that examined the emotional fitness levels of the referees, and this study examined the self-worth, burnout, and perceived social support levels of a total of 300 referees from soccer, swimming, and canoeing (62). As a result of the study, it was stated that the socioeconomic status of soccer referees was higher than canoe and swimming referees, but soccer referees were under high social pressure. It has also been reported that female referees had more symptoms of emotional disturbances than male referees.

The referee ruling a game must be fair and his decisions should be sound and fair. These expectations increase the pressure on the referee. In addition, the fact that his performance is instantly monitored and evaluated by external factors, such as spectators, athletes, and observers, adds extra stress on the referee (46). The referee is also stressed because he knows that he is the only person authorized to make decisions in the competition (79) and he is the person who will be criticized intensely after the competition for his in-game decisions (47). The referee can tend to self-handicapping to avoid the criticism that may come to him due to possible wrong decisions during the match or to stay away from the sanctions that may come from the referee observers (48).

Searches in Turkish literature on self-handicapping levels of referees turned out that some studies examined self-handicapping levels of soccer,

badminton, curling, wave surfing, taekwondo, and wrestling referees. Examining the self-handicapping levels of the referees is important in sports competitions as the referees have critical power over the result of the game. Because the referee is the ruling person in the game and his decisions in the game cannot be discussed. This power of the referee is a factor that may affect the result of the game. However, a single wrong decision made by the referee may waste all the preparations and training done by an athlete or a team during the entire season (48). This is a great deal of stress for the referee and when the pressure created by the competition increases, referees may use self-handicapping strategies to protect their self-esteem (63).

Examining the self-handicapping levels of the referees revealed that taekwondo referees had the highest self-handicapping levels and the level was above the median value reported by Rhodewalt (66). It was understood that soccer was in the second place, but their self-handicapping levels were below the general median value and the referees in curling, badminton, wrestling, and wave surfing were followed, respectively. It has been stated that the higher self-handicapping levels of Taekwondo referees might have resulted because taekwondo was a combat sport. In addition, in taekwondo, athletes move very fast and apply many techniques in a short time. Due to the characteristics of Taekwondo, the referees' concentration levels must be higher than the other referees in order not to make mistakes and to carefully follow the positions. It has been stated that in this very fast sport, taekwondo referees may be more directed towards self-handicapping behavior to protect their self-esteem in case of a potential error (44).

In a study involving soccer referees, it was seen that the self-handicapping levels of these referees were below the general median value (48). Soccer is the most popular sport in the world (22) and more than half of the world's population is closely involved with soccer. This popularity of soccer naturally affects the behaviors of the referees both on and off the field. Soccer spectators probably know the rules of soccer well, make comments, and constantly criticize the referee's decisions. In the event of an incorrect decision, serious pressure may arise on the referee both on the field and afterward. It was reported that soccer referees tend to self-handicapping strategies in order to resist the criticism

that may come from the spectators/players and protect their self-esteem (46).

Self-handicapping levels of curling, badminton, and wrestling referees were found to be low and close to each other. Curling is a sport in which players traditionally strive to demonstrate good in-game behavior, preferring to lose over an unfair victory. In addition, the players contribute to the decisions to be made within the competition. This, in turn, reduces the stress on the referees and partially reduces the negative feelings that the referees may feel since the responsibility for decisions is not solely on the shoulders of the referee. Although the behavioral characteristics of the players make it easier for the referee to make the right decisions and make it possible to manage the game soundly, there are times that the decisions are necessary to be made by the referee. The low self-handicapping levels of curling referees are due to the philosophy of the game and the fair-play behavior of the athletes (47).

Self-handicapping levels of badminton referees were reported to be very low. Badminton is not as popular as soccer or taekwondo and has a relatively limited audience. It was concluded in the study that this situation caused the referees ruling the competition to feel more comfortable and less inclined towards self-handicapping due to less social pressure (43).

A study examining the self-handicapping levels of wrestling referees included 22 Category I (highest international) wrestling referees. The self-handicapping levels of these referees were found to be well below the average stated in the literature. Refereeing in the international arena can be a great stressor (63), but the results of the study suggested that the self-handicapping levels of wrestling referees were relatively low. It was concluded that the fact that the referees involved in that study were highly experienced (86.4% of those with 15 years and more experience) and they had to pass challenging exams and training in order to be promoted to the level of international refereeing reduces the self-handicapping tendency of international Category I wrestling referees (45).

In another study, self-handicapping levels of surfing referees were examined (46). It was reported that in wave surfing there were only 788 active athletes (78) and this is a relatively small number. In surfing, the decisions and points made by the referee affect the result of the match. In addition, when the

referee decides that a surfer has committed a rule violation, it may cause that athlete to be disqualified from that stage or the entire competition. The referees may tend to self-handicapping to make a valid excuse against the technical committee, observers, or federation officials in case of a wrong decision or scoring erroneously during the competition. On the other hand, the referees' self-handicapping levels were found to be very low. It has been reported that windsurfing was not so popular, the number of athletes and spectators was limited, and the competition rules were not well known by the public. So, the referees' stress levels kept at a low level and therefore their self-handicapping levels were low.

Effects of Variables on Self-handicapping Levels

In studies examining the self-handicapping levels of individuals in the field of sports, the factors affecting the self-handicapping levels were also examined. It has been shown that the factors such as marital status, education level, monthly income level, and proficiency in a foreign language do not have significant effects on the self-handicapping levels of the referees. Only in the study examining badminton referees, it was shown that female referees' self-handicapping levels were significantly higher than male referees (43), and in taekwondo, the place of residence variable affected the self-handicapping scores (province>district) (44). When the studies conducted outside the field of sports were examined, it was seen that there was a similar situation and self-handicapping was not affected by the level of income (8), level of education (3), marital status, professional status, or years of seniority (13).

It is thought that the most important factor affecting the level of self-handicapping is gender but there is no consensus on how gender affects the level of self-handicapping. Studies report different results as some studies suggested that gender did not affect self-handicapping (13, 28, 42, 82), some studies suggested that men have higher self-handicapping levels (8, 18, 21, 36, 56), and some studies stated that women have higher self-handicapping levels (88, 89). The reason for the self-handicapping tendency of men was thought that men may tend to self-handicapping to maintain their higher social status than women (56). On the other hand, it was stated that if the determinant of success in performance was seen as the level of social competence, self-handicapping tendencies of women would be higher than men, and when the success criterion was

academic competence, men's self-handicapping tendency would be higher (21).

Conclusion

As a result of reviewing the studies on self-handicapping in the sports field, the following results have been reached:

- Self-handicapping is most associated with self-esteem. There is a negative correlation between self-esteem level and the frequency of self-handicapping behavior.

- Athletes are prone to self-handicapping when they feel threatened about their physical abilities.

- The main factor affecting the level of self-handicapping is gender. Although there is no consensus, men's self-handicapping tendencies are generally higher than women's.

- The level of self-handicapping is not affected by demographic or sociocultural variables in general.

- As the importance of the competition or performance increases, the tendency to self-handicapping increases.

- Individuals who use self-handicapping benefit from claimed or behavioral self-handicapping strategies, but claimed self-handicapping strategy is not preferred by individuals in team sports because of the risk of being excluded by their teammates.

- If self-handicapping becomes a habit, individuals experience psychological and social adaptation problems.

- Perfectionist individuals are more inclined to self-handicapping.

The research subjects and areas which have not been studied, or few studies have been done, in the field of sports on self-handicapping can be listed as follows:

- Although there are some studies on athletes, there are no studies investigating the self-handicapping levels of trainers.

- There is no study on self-handicapping behaviors of athletes comparing self-handicapping levels/behaviors before and after the games.

- There are limited studies examining the self-handicapping levels of referees in popular sports.

- Studies on the effect of disability on the level of self-handicapping and especially on the self-handicapping levels of athletes with disabilities are limited.

- Self-handicapping was found to be studied especially in education-related fields and studies are mostly carried out on academic staff, teachers, and students. It is necessary to increase the existing knowledge by carrying out more studies in the field of sports.

REFERENCES.

1. Abacı R, Akın A. Kendini sabotaj: İnsanoğlunun sınırlı doğasının bir sonucu. Ankara: Pegem Yayınları, 2011: 23-25.
2. Abdel-Khalek AM. Introduction to the psychology of self-esteem. F. Holloway (Ed.), in *Self-esteem perspectives, influences and improvement strategies*, (pp. 1-23). New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2016.
3. Akçakoyun F. Analysis of self-esteem levels of students in physical education and sports high school. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 2018; 6(2): 73-79. <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v6i2.2951>
4. Akın A. Kendini sabotaj ölçeği: Geçerlik ve güvenilirlik çalışması. *Eğitim ve Bilim Dergisi*, 2012; 37(164): 176-187.
5. Akın A, Abacı R, Akın Ü. Self-handicapping: a conceptual analysis. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 2011; 3(3): 1155-1168.
6. Alesi M, Rappo G, Pepi A. Self-esteem at school and self-handicapping in childhood: comparison of groups with learning disabilities. *Psychological Reports*, 2012; 111(3): 952-962. <https://doi.org/10.2466/15.10.pr0.111.6.952-962>
7. Amraei K, Azizi, MP, Khoshkhabar A, Azizmazreah, H, Fathi E. Difference between the students with visual and auditory impairment in self-handicapping. *Spectrum (Educational Research Service)*, 2017; 29(1): 1-6.
8. Anlı G, Akın A, Şar AH, Eker H. Kendini sabotaj ile psikolojik iyi olma arasındaki ilişkinin çeşitli değişkenler açısından incelenmesi. *Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 2015; 14(54): 160-172.
9. Bailis DS. Benefits of self-handicapping in sport: A field study of university athletes. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 2001; 33(4): 213-223.
10. Barutçu Yıldırım F, Demir A. Kendini engellemenin yordayıcıları olarak öz saygı, öz anlayış ve akademik özyeterlilik. *Ege Eğitim Dergisi*, 2017; 18(2): 676-701.
11. Baumgardner AH, Lake EA, Arkin RM. Claiming mood as a self-handicap: The influence of spoiled and unspoiled public identities. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 1985; 11(4): 349-357. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167285114001>
12. Berglas S. The success syndrome: hitting bottom when you reach the top. USA: Springer, 1986: 198-213.
13. Büyükgöze H, Gün F. Araştırma görevlilerinin kendini sabotaj eğilimlerinin incelenmesi. *Hitit Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 2015; 8(2): 689-704.
14. Carron AV, Prapavessis H, Grove JR. Group effects and self-handicapping. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 1994; 16: 246-257.
15. Chen Z, Sun K, Wang K. Self-esteem, achievement goals, and self-handicapping in college physical education. *Psychological Reports*, 2018; 121(4): 690-704. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294117735333>

16. Coudeville GR, Ginis KAM, Famose JP. Determinants of self-handicapping strategies in sport and their effects on athletic performance. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 2008; 36(3): 391-398. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2008.36.3.391>
17. Coudeville GR, Gernigon C, Ginis KAM. Self-esteem, self-confidence, anxiety and claimed self-handicapping: a mediational analysis. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 2011; 12: 670-675.
18. Coudeville GR, Ginis KAM, Famose JP, Gernigon C. Effects of self-handicapping strategies on anxiety before athletic performance. *Sport Psychologist*, 2008; 22(3): 304-315.
19. Cox CB, Guiliano TA. Constructing obstacles vs. making excuses: examining perceivers' reactions to behavioral and self-reported self-handicapping. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 1999; 14(3): 419-433.
20. Deppe RK, Harackiewicz JM. Self-handicapping and intrinsic motivation: buffering intrinsic motivation from the threat of failure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1996; 70(4): 868-876.
21. Dietrich D. Gender differences in self handicapping: regardless of academic or social competence implications. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 1995; 23(4): 403-410.
22. Dvorak J, Junge A, Graf-Baumann T, Peterson L. Football is the most popular sport worldwide. *The American Journal of Sports Medicine*, 2004; 32(15): 3S-4S. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0363546503262283>. PMID: 14754853.
23. Elliot AJ, Thrash TM. The intergenerational transmission of fear of failure. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 2004; 30: 957-971. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167203262024>
24. Elliot AJ, Cury F, Fryer JW, Huguet P. Achievement goals, self-handicapping, and performance attainment: a mediational analysis. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 2006; 28: 344-361.
25. Eronen S, Nurmi JE, Salmela-Aro K. Optimistic, defensive-pessimistic, impulsive and self-handicapping strategies in university environments. *Learning and Instruction*, 1998; 8(2): 159-177.
26. Ferradas MM, Freire C, Rodriguez S, Pineiro I. Self-handicapping and self-esteem profiles and their relation to achievement goals. *Annals of Psychology*, 2018; 34(3): 545-554. <https://doi.org/10.6018/analesps.34.3.319781>
27. Ferrand C, Champely S, Brunel PC. Relations between female students' personality traits and reported handicaps to rhythmic gymnastics performance. *Psychological Reports*, 2005; 96(2): 361-373. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.96.2.361-373>
28. Finez L, Berjot S, Rosnet E, Cleveland C, Tice DM. Trait self-esteem and claimed self-handicapping motives in sports situations. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 2012; 30(16): 1757-65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2012.718089>
29. Flett GL, Hewitt PL, Blankstein KR, Mosher SW. Perfectionism, self-actualization, and personal adjustment. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 1991; 6(5): 147-160.
30. Ganda DR, Boruchovitch E. Self-handicapping strategies for learning of preservice teachers. *Estudos de Psicologia*, 2015; 32(3): 417-425. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0103-166X2015000300007>
31. Gözmen Elmas A, Aşçı FH. Sporcularda kendini sabotaj: benlik saygısı, başarı hedefleri ve başarısızlık korkusunun rolü. *Türkiye Klinikleri Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, 2017; 9(3): 108-117. <https://doi.org/10.5336/sportsci.2017-55210>
32. Greenless I, Jones S, Holder T, Thelwell R. The effects of self-handicapping on attributions and perceived judo competence. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 2006; 24(3): 273-280.
33. Harris RN, Snyder CR, Higgins RL, Schrag JL. Enhancing the prediction of self-handicapping. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1986; 51(6): 1191-1199.
34. Hausenblas HA, Carron AV. Group cohesion and self-handicapping in female and male athletes. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 1996; 18: 132-143.
35. Hirt ER, Deppe RK, Gordon LJ. Self-reported versus behavioral self-handicapping: empirical evidence for a theoretical distinction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1991; 61(6): 981-991. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.61.6.981>
36. Hirt ER, McCrea SM. Man smart, woman smarter? Getting to the root of gender differences in self-handicapping. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2009; 3(3): 260-274.
37. Hirt ER, McCrea SM, Boris HI. I know you self-handicapped last exam: gender differences in reactions to self-handicapping. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2003; 84(1): 177-193. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.1.177>
38. Hobden K, Pliner P. Self-handicapping and dimensions of perfectionism: self presentation vs self-protection. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 1995; 29(4): 461-474. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1995.1027>
39. Hofseth E, Toering T, Jordet G. Shame proneness, guilt proneness, behavioral self-handicapping, and skill level: a mediational analysis. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 2015; 00: 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2015.1014974>
40. Ibrahim H, Morrison N. Self-actualization and self-concept among athletes. *Research Quarterly. American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, 1976; 47(1): 68-79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10671315.1976.10615342>
41. Jones EE, Berglas S. Control of attributions about the self through self-handicapping strategies: the appeal of alcohol and the role of underachievement. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 1978; 4(2): 200-206.
42. Kalyon A, Dadandı İ, Yazıcı H. Kendini sabote etme eğilimi ile narsistik kişilik özellikleri, anksiyete duyarlılığı, sosyal destek ve akademik başarı arasındaki ilişki. *Düşünen Adam The Journal of Psychiatry and Neurological Sciences*, 2016; 29: 237-246.
43. Kamuk YU. Badminton hakemlerinin kendini sabotaj ve benlik saygısı düzeyleri. *Journal of Global Sport and Education Research*, 2019; 2(2): 22-36.
44. Kamuk YU. Self-handicapping and self-esteem levels of taekwondo referees. *Turkish Journal of Sport and Exercise*, 2020; 22(1): 1334-141. <https://doi.org/10.15314/tsed.689121>
45. Kamuk YU. Self-handicapping and self-esteem levels of Turkish Category I wrestling referees. *Türkiye Klinikleri Journal of Sports Sciences*, 2020; 12(3): 379-386. <https://doi.org/10.5336/sportsci.2020-74853>
46. Kamuk YU, Şensoy E. Dalga sörfü hakemlerinin kendini sabotaj düzeyleri. *Turkish Studies Social Sciences*, 2019; 14(3): 683-695. <https://doi.org/10.29228/TurkishStudies.22610>
47. Kamuk YU, Şensoy E. Curling hakemlerinin kendini sabotaj düzeyleri. *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, 2019; 3(2): 51-60.
48. Kamuk YU, Evli F, Tecimer H. Futbol hakemlerinin kendini sabotaj düzeyleri. *Hitit Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 2018; 11(3): 2257-2267. <https://doi.org/10.17218/hititsosbil.461486>
49. Kamuk YU, Tüzün S, Doğan S. Engelli ve engelli olmayan yüzücülerin kendini sabotaj ve benlik saygısı düzeyleri. *MANAS Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 2020; 9(4): 2577-2588.
50. Karner-Hutuleac A. Perfectionism and self-handicapping in adult education. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2014; 142: 434-438. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.699>
51. Kearns H, Forbes A, Gardiner M. A cognitive behavioural coaching intervention for the treatment of perfectionism and self-handicapping in a nonclinical population. *Behaviour*

- Change, 2007; 24(3): 157-172. <https://doi.org/10.1375/bech.24.3.157>
52. Kearns H, Forbes A, Gardiner M, Marshall K. When a high distinction isn't good enough: a review of perfectionism and self-handicapping. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 2008; 35(3): 21-36.
53. Kim H, Lee K, Hong Y. Claiming the validity of negative in-group stereotypes when foreseeing a challenge: a self-handicapping account. *Self and Identity*, 2012; 11(3): 285-303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2011.561560>
54. Körükçü Ö, Gündoğan A, Ogelman HG. Okul öncesi eğitimi öğretmenliği lisans öğrencilerinin benlik saygısı ve empatik becerileri arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesi. *Kastamonu Üniversitesi Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*, 2014; 23(4): 1665-1678.
55. Kuczka KK, Treasure DC. Self-handicapping in competitive sport: influence of the motivational climate, self-efficacy, and perceived importance. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 2005; 6(5): 539-550. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2004.03.007>
56. Lucas JW, Lovaglia MJ. Self-handicapping: gender, race and status. *Current Research in Social Psychology*, 2005; 10(15): 234-249.
57. Martin AJ, Marsh HW, Williamson A, Debus RL. Self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and goal orientation: a qualitative study of university students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2003; 95(3): 617-628.
58. Martin KA, Brawley LR. Self-handicapping in physical achievement settings: the contributions of self-esteem and self-efficacy. *Self and Identity*, 2002; 1(4): 337-351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860290106814>
59. Mirzaee M, Farahani A, Heidari M, Amrai K. Comparing self-handicapping among blind and deaf students. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2011; 15: 777-779. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.03.183>
60. Mirzeoğlu D, Çetinkanat C. Elit takım sporcularının kendini gerçekleştirme ve sürekli kaygı düzeyleri arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi. *Gazi Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, 2005; 10(3): 19-28.
61. Özgüngör S, Duatepe Paksu A. Üniversite öğrencilerinde benlik saygısı düzeyine göre akademik başarıyı yordayan değişkenler. *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi*, 2017; 7(48): 111-125.
62. Pedrosa I, Garcia-Cueto E. Psychological aspects in elite referees: Does salary affect your emotional well-being? *Journal of Sports Psychology*, 2015; 24(2): 241-248.
63. Prapavessis H, Grove JR. Self-handicapping and self-esteem. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 1998; 10(2): 175-184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413209808406386>
64. Prapavessis H, Grove JR. Personality variables as antecedents of precompetitive mood state temporal patterning. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 1994; 25: 347-365.
65. Prapavessis H, Grove JR, Maddison R, Zillmann N. Self-handicapping tendencies, coping, and anxiety responses among athletes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 2003; 4: 357-375. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1469-0292\(02\)00020-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1469-0292(02)00020-1)
66. Rhodewalt F. Self-handicappers: individual differences in the preference for anticipatory self-protective acts. R. Higgins, C. R. Snyder ve S. Berglas (Eds), in *Self-handicapping: the paradox that isn't*. New York: Guilford Press, 1990: pp. 69-106.
67. Rhodewalt F, Tragakis MW. Self-handicapping and school: academic self-concept and self-protective behavior. J. Aronson (Ed), in *Improving academic achievement*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2002: pp. 111-135.
68. Rhodewalt F, Saltzman AT, Wittmer J. Self-handicapping among competitive athletes: the role of practice in self-esteem protection. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 1984; 5(3): 197-209.
69. Rhodewalt F, Sanbonmatsu DM, Tschanz B, Feick DL, Waller A. Self-handicapping and interpersonal trade-offs: the effects of claimed self-handicaps on observers' performance evaluations and feedback. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 1995; 21(10): 1042-1050. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672952110005>
70. Rhodewalt F, Tragakis MW, Finnerty J. Narcissism and self-handicapping: linking self-aggrandizement to behavior. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 2006; 40: 573-597. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2005.05.001>
71. Rosenberg M. *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965: pp. 16-36.
72. Sansone RA, McLean JS, Wiederman MW. The relationship between medically self-sabotaging behaviors and borderline personality disorder among psychiatric inpatients. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 2008; 10: 448-452.
73. Self EA. Situational influences on self-handicapping. R. Higgins, C. R. Snyder ve S. Berglas (Eds), in *Self-handicapping: the paradox that isn't*. New York: Guilford Press 1990: pp. 37-65.
74. Sherrill C, Silliman L, Gench B, Hinson M. Self-actualisation of elite wheelchair athletes. *Paraplegia*, 1990; 28: 252-260.
75. Smith TW, Snyder CR, Handelsman MM. On the self-serving function of an academic wooden leg: test anxiety as a self-handicapping strategy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1982; 42: 314-321.
76. Sniezek RC. Behavioral self-handicapping among male and female athletes. *Modern Psychological Studies*, 2001; 7(1): 20-27.
77. Solomon LJ, Rothblum ED. Academic procrastination: frequency and cognitive-behavioral correlates. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 1984; 31(4): 503-509.
78. Spor Bakanlığı. Sporcu sayıları. Accessed on: 26 Ağustos 2019. Accessed at: <http://sgm.gsb.gov.tr/Public/Edit/images/SGM/kurumsal/istatistikler/2017/SPORCU%20SAYILARI%202007-2017.xls>
79. Şahin HM. *Beden eğitimi ve spor sözlüğü*. İstanbul: Morpa Yayınları, 2005: p. 155.
80. Thomas CR, Gadbois SA. Academic self-handicapping: the role of self-concept clarity and students' learning strategies. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2007; 77: 101-119. <https://doi.org/10.1348/000709905x79644>
81. Thompson T, Richardson A. Self-handicapping status, claimed self-handicaps and reduced practice effort following success and failure feedback. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2001; 71: 151-170.
82. Tice DM. Esteem protection or enhancement? Self-handicapping motives and attributions differ by trait self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1991; 60(5): 711-725. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.60.5.711>
83. Tice DM, Baumeister RF. Self-esteem, self-handicapping, and self-presentation: The strategy of inadequate practice. *Journal of Personality*, 1990; 58(2): 443-464. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1990.tb00237.x>
84. Urdan T. Predictors of academic self-handicapping and achievement: Examining achievement goals, classroom goal structures, and culture. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2004; 96(2): 251-264. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.96.2.251>
85. Üzar Özçetin YS, Hiçdurmaz D. Kendini sabote etme ve ruh sağlığı üzerine etkisi [Self-handicapping and its impact on mental health]. *Psikiyatride Güncel Yaklaşımlar*, 2016; 8(2): 145-154. <https://doi.org/10.18863/pgy.13806>
86. Üzbe H, Bacanlı H. Başarı hedef yönelimi, benlik saygısı ve akademik başarının kendini engellemeyi yordamadaki rolü. *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 2015; 13(1): 33-50.

87. Warner S, Moore S. Excuses, excuses: self-handicapping in an Australian adolescent sample. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 2004; 33(4): 271-281.
88. Weary G, Williams JP. Depressive self-presentation: beyond self handicapping. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1990; 58(5): 892-898. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.58.5.892>
89. Yavuzer Y. Investigating the relationship between self-handicapping tendencies, self-esteem and cognitive distortions. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 2015; 15(4): 879-890. <https://doi.org/10.12738/estp.2015.4.2434>
90. Zarshenas L, Jahromi LA, Jahromi MF, Manshadi MD. Self-handicapping among nursing students: an interventional study. *BMC Medical Education*, 2019; 19(1): 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-018-1441-6>
91. Zuckerman M, Tsai FF. Costs of self-handicapping. *Journal of Personality*, 2005; 73(2): 411-442.
92. Zuckerman M, Kieffer SC, Knee CR. Consequences of self-handicapping: effects on coping, academic performance and adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1998; 74(6): 1619-1628. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.6.1619>