

# Self-Esteem and Exploitation in Elite and Non-Elite Athletes

Shiva Lotfollahi, Mir Hamid Salehian\*, Roya Hosseinzadeh Peyghan

*Department of Educational Sciences, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran*

*\*Corresponding Author Email: [m\\_salehian@iaut.ac.ir](mailto:m_salehian@iaut.ac.ir)*

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the self-esteem and exploitation of elite and non-elite athletes. This research is applied and descriptive survey method. The statistical population included all 500 elite and non-elite athletes of men and women in East Azarbaijan province. Sample size was calculated on basis of Cochran formula for unlimited society as 384 people, and finally 360 completed questionnaires. Data was collected by Russkin & Terry's (1988) narcissistic questionnaire. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to investigate natural distribution of data. After identifying abnormal data of research, non-parametric U-Mann-Whitney statistical method was used to examine the difference between the variables and to prioritize the variables by Friedman test. The results showed that there is a difference between self-esteem and exploitation in elite and non-elite athletes.

**Key words:** Self-esteem, Exploitation, Elite, Non-Elite Athletes

## Introduction

One of the categories that is related to current knowledge and is effective in helping athletes to succeed in sports fields. It is the mental and psychological issues of athletes. Among the mental and psychological issues that have recently attracted the attention of researchers and sports managers are the effects of athletes' narcissism in the fields of professional and non-professional sports, including the sports development of these athletes. Narcissism is synonymous with loving oneself more than usual or self-esteem and self-admiration and self-centeredness (Salehian & Dana, 2022). This category causes multiple and variable effects in sports. According to Leon (2006), the biggest factor in the success or failure of elite and non-elite athletes is related to their psychological factors (Corvela et al., 2009). Narcissism is one of the psychological characteristics that seem to have an effective role on the performance of athletes in sports competitions (Salehian & Namvar, 2021).

The concept of self, which begins to form when a person is born, forms the core and essence of the personality. Different types of self-concept lead to the formation of different types of personality, which expresses a certain pattern of behavior and way of thinking, which shows how a person adapts and interacts with the environment. One of the personality traits is narcissism, which sometimes becomes extreme and becomes the basis for a person's isolation in the environment. People with a narcissistic personality are characterized by a strong sense of self-aggrandizement, a mental preoccupation with success, and unlimited power and talent. They are eager for the attention of others but unable to express mutual affection (Raskin et al., 1988). In many people who are not suffering from narcissistic personality disorder, this state is seen within normal limits. Since this state plays a positive role in the organization and direction of many personal and psychological characteristics such as self-worth, self-esteem, self-confidence, appropriate performance and the like, its evaluation is important (Mirsafian, 2009).

Salehian & Namvar (2021) showed that in the group of elite athletes, there is a negative correlation between narcissism and social psychological adjustment (Salehian & Namvar, 2021), also Salehian & Samadi (2021) stated that the increase in the dimensions of narcissism includes authority, showing off Being superior, being entitled, exploitation, self-righteousness, and pride cause the reduction of this strategy (Salehian & Samadi, 2021).

People often have a contagious, charming and dignified personality and often want their friends to understand and trust them (Dineen, 2015). To understand the psychology of sports elites, researchers study the differences between elite and non-elite people in different sports disciplines in terms of personality dimensions. These studies indicate that sports elites are more emotionally stable and extroverted. Also, in self-expression and self-confidence, they are superior to athletes who are not at championship levels (Mirsafian, 2009). Saient and colleagues (2013) showed that elite athletes in some sports fields, such as track and field and gymnastics, have more narcissism than other fields. Nelson (2014) observed in his research that football spectators consider this field superior to other fields and that football players show more narcissism and consider themselves superior to other people in society. In this context, Nelson (2014) showed that this view is observed due to the high attention given to elite and national athletes (such as football) in the society. National sportsmen have a lot of income and the mass media pay a lot of attention to them and even their personal memories, which creates a background for the manifestation of narcissism in them.

Since these athletes are responsible for all events and incidents inside and outside the training hall, therefore, investigating the level of narcissism of their athletes is of great importance. Therefore, what is important for service organizations is to try to solve the problem of athletes' narcissism by paying attention to his obvious and hidden in the present and future. Today, with the increasing emergence of private clubs and other institutions along with other athletes, the importance of using new plans to optimally increase the narcissism of athletes becomes apparent, and this research tries to examine the profile of narcissism in elite and non-elite athletes, and by using the results of this research, we can find the necessary solutions and will be available to officials, coaches, athletes and parents to use appropriate narcissism to increase them.

## Methods

The research method is a descriptive-survey type, which was implemented using the field method.

### *Statistical population, sampling*

The statistical population of the research is all the elite male and female athletes of East Azerbaijan province in two age groups of youth and adults from individual disciplines (wrestling, taekwondo, track and field, karate) who participated in the provincial championships in 2023 and the non-elite athletes of East Azerbaijan province who participated in three In the last year, they could not get provincial positions in the desired fields, and there were 500 people (250 elite and 250 non-elite). The sample size was calculated based on Cochran's formula to the number of 384 people, and to prevent the decrease in the number, the final sample size was considered to be 440 people. A simple stratified random method was used for sampling. The researcher, in coordination with the officials of the desired federations as well as the officials of the provincial competitions, sent the questionnaires to the non-elite by phone and email, and distributed the questionnaires to the athletes by contacting them in person at the competitions and collected them after completion.

### *Measuring tool*

Raskin, Terry (1988) narcissism questionnaire was used to collect data. Raskin, Terry's narcissism questionnaire (1988) had 40 questions for elite and non-elite athletes in subscales (power and authority, self-righteousness, superiority, showing off, exploitation, pride, self-actualization). The response scale of this questionnaire is based on a 5-point Likert scale. The face validity of the questionnaire was obtained through experts and reliability was also obtained in a pilot study through Cronbach's alpha of Raskin, Terry's narcissism questionnaire (1988) ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical method was used for the normality of the research data. After confirming the non-normality of the data, the non-parametric statistical method of Yeoman-Whitney test was used using SPSS version 16 software to investigate the profile of narcissism in elite and non-elite athletes.

**Findings**

**Table 1.** Comparing the average views of elite and non-elite athletes regarding selfishness and exploitation

Ranks				
	group	N	Rank average	Total ranks
Narcissism(power and authority)	Elite	240	175.17	4204
	Non-elite	120	191.17	22940
	Total	360		
Narcissism(selfishness)	Elite	240	168.63	40472
	Non-elite	120	204.23	24508
	Total	360		

**Table 2.** Comparing the average views of elite and non-elite athletes regarding selfishness and exploitation

	power and authority	selfishness
U man Witny	13120	11552
Wilcoxon	42040	40472
Z	-3.070	-1.379
Sig.	0.002	0.168

The findings in Tables 1 and 2 showed that according to the level of significance, if it is greater than 0.05, it can be said that the difference between the means is not significant. So it can be concluded that there is no difference between selfishness and exploitation of elite and non-elite athletes.

**Discussion**

The results showed that there is no difference between the power and authority narcissism profile of elite and non-elite athletes. This result is consistent with the findings of Dinan (2015) and Mojak and Davis (2012). But it is inconsistent with the findings of Amos et al. (2006), and the reason for this inconsistency may be due to the difference in the statistical population and the statistical sample and the culture of the statistical population or the cultural conditions and situation of the statistical population of the study and that no comparative research was found on this issue that could be discussed further. Because, athletes are dealing with components such as an innate talent to influence people, being a successful person, showing off as a good leader, expressing their opinions to those around them, having authority over others, being a good leader for those around them in their field of work, because these relationships It is vital for athletes' narcissism and determines their position in terms of narcissism from the point of view of elite and non-elite athletes. The results of various researches show that narcissistic athletes are in the component of authority, influencing people, feeling successful in affairs, feeling successful in leadership, being bold and assertive, having authority, feeling recognition of authority by others, leadership, the feeling of being born as a leader (Amos et al., 2006). Dinen (2015) investigated the personality characteristics of narcissistic people in a research and showed that narcissistic people often have a contagious, charming and bossy personality and often want their friends to understand and trust them. Mojak and Davis (2012) in a research report entitled Comparison of narcissism in professional and amateur athletes showed that there was a significant difference between professional athletes and amateur athletes and non-athletes in the characteristics of narcissism, exploitation, pride, self-actualization, power and Authority, superiority, showed off. In explaining this finding, it can be acknowledged that narcissistic athletes use each of these components to successfully carry out their affairs, and each of these factors has a role in motivating the growth and development of sports in especially non-elite athletes. Because elite athletes may not want to express themselves with power and authority according to the issues and culture ruling the society, or maybe they are looking for new examples of power and authority through social channels and virtual space, etc.

The results showed that the narcissism profile of elite athletes is more than that of non-elite athletes. This result is consistent with the findings of Ames et al. (2006), Nelson (2014), Mojak and Davis (2012), Bigler and Whiting (2009), Salehian & Namvar (2021) and Salehian & Samadi (2021) and that a comparative study about this issue was not found to be discussed further. Because, athletes with components such as accepting responsibility for making decisions, always knowing what I'm doing, sometimes relying on others to do things, I can live in any way I want, I intend to be a great person, from others around me I am more talented, they are involved in their field of work, because these connections are vital for athletes' narcissism and determine their position in terms of narcissism from the point of view of elite and non-elite athletes. The results of various research show that narcissistic athletes in the component of self-esteem, acceptance of decision-making responsibility when feeling competent, knowledge of performance at certain times, lack of dependence on others in doing things, belief in complete freedom in lifestyle, hope for success, belief in ability It is against others (Ames et al., 2006). Football spectators consider the field of football superior to other fields, and football

players show more narcissism and consider themselves superior to other people in society. And also, it showed that this point of view is due to a lot of attention to elite and national athletes (such as football) in the society. National sportsmen have a lot of income and the mass media pay a lot of attention to them and even their personal memories, which creates a background for the manifestation of narcissism in them (Nelson, 2014). Mojek and Davis (2012) showed that there was a significant difference between professional athletes and amateur athletes and non-athletes in the characteristics of narcissism, exploitation, pride, self-actualization, power and authority, superiority. They showed off. Biegler and Whiting (2009) found that elite athletes are less self-righteous, exploitative, proud, self-fulfilling compared to ordinary athletes and non-athletes. In explaining this finding, narcissistic athletes can admit that such factors can logically elevate the competence of elite athletes compared to non-elite ones, and such thinking can be a turning point for the continuation of these athletes' sports.

The results showed that the exploitative narcissistic profile of elite athletes is more than non-elite athletes. This result is consistent with the findings of Ames et al. (2006), Kaplan and Sadok (1998), Mojak and Davis (2012), Bigler and Whiting (2009), Salehian & Namvar (2021) and Salehian & Samadi (2021) and that the comparative research was not found to be discussed further. Because, athletes with components like I try to accept the consequences of my behavior, it's easy for me to use people, I can easily read people's hands, everyone likes to hear what I have to say, people sometimes believe what I tell them, in their field of work is related, because these connections are vital for athletes' narcissism and determine their position in terms of narcissism from the point of view of elite and non-elite athletes. The results of various researches show that narcissistic athletes have the ability to express their opinions and accept the results of behavior, the feeling of being easy to guide and control people, the feeling of reading minds and understanding people, the feeling of interest, the ability to tell stories and believe in convincing others (Ames et al., 2006). Narcissistic people are unique individuals that others should treat them in a special way, and they cannot tolerate criticism and disregard, and they only consider themselves important and have exploitative behavior in interpersonal relationships (Kaplan and Sadok, 1998). Mojak and Davis (2012) in a research report entitled Comparison of narcissism in professional and amateur athletes showed that there was a significant difference between professional athletes and amateur athletes and non-athletes in the characteristics of narcissism, exploitation, pride, self-actualization, power and Authority, superiority, showed off. Biegler and Whiting (2009) in the research titled comparing the characteristics of narcissism in elite and ordinary athletes found that elite athletes are less self-righteous, exploitative, proud, self-fulfilling compared to ordinary athletes and non-athletes. In explaining this finding, it can be acknowledged that narcissistic athletes who use such factors can logically elevate the competence of elite athletes over non-elite athletes, and such thinking can be a turning point for the continuation of these athletes' sports. Even though this can have consequences for elite athletes after their championship period or injury, these athletes themselves will be exploited by coaches and other athletes.

### Conclusion

The results showed that the profile of narcissism of power and authority, self-righteousness, superiority, showing off, exploitation, pride, self-fulfillment of elite athletes is more than non-elite athletes. For narcissism, one should pay attention to the factors of power and authority, self-righteousness, superiority, showing off, exploitation, pride, self-fulfillment, and also examining the point of view of elite and non-elite athletes with narcissism. To know the state of narcissism of athletes in other cities, countries and even universities, they need to conduct a wider research.

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