

## Fear of Negative Evaluation of Deaf Athletes

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**ABSTRACT** This paper aims to determine how the fear of negative evaluation of deaf futsal players is shaped by some variables. Sports people can experience anxiety when they are negatively affected in trainings, competitions or in social environments. One of these anxiety states is the fear of negative evaluation. To determine how these fears are shaped will enable deaf sports people to understand their identities and help trainers to exhibit appropriate approaches towards sports people. In this paper, the research group consisted of 135 deaf sports people of which 103 were males and 32 were females. These participants came from different countries and had at least 55 dB in both ears. According to the paper results, it was found that educational background and sports experience of the deaf sports people created no statistically significant difference. In addition, it was also discovered that the fear of negative evaluation was higher in females.

### INTRODUCTION

Humans are psychological, social, cultural and biological beings that have diverse dimensions that are all related and a positive or negative change in any of these variables influences others as well. These living dimensions are based on the variables named human relationships and communication which enable human beings to meet all their needs (Dogan 2009). People communicate for various reasons such as the need for love, acceptance, physiological needs, continuance of race, and identity acquisition (Bilgin 2003).

According to Beck (2005), social anxiety is the exaggerated fear of a person to be the focus point or evaluated by other/s and regarded to be worthless. According to Weeks et al. (2008), the basis of social anxiety is the fear of evaluation. Whether this evaluation is positive or negative, leads to anxiety for the person. The fear of negative evaluation includes criticism, disapproval and rejection. Naturally, the person lives in fear and has anxiety in all negative evaluation states (Dođan 2009). Social anxiety is correlated with the fear of social investigation and negative evaluation in interpersonal relationships and nonfunctional attitudes such as avoidance of interpersonal intimacy, and intense need for approval and dependent behaviors (Darcy et al. 2005).

Experiences in building relationships and communication with people, make social anxiety a universal issue. Some people have low levels

of anxiety while others have much higher anxiety levels (Beidel and Turner 2007). This state can be observed even in people with no disabilities and this leads to a natural communication challenge between hearing and deaf people using different languages. Rather than the challenge within people's own culture, this challenge is experienced by other society members with no hearing disability.

Deaf people who use sign language face the same dilemma. Interpreting services, realtime captioning, and communication via the Internet may better equip them to learn in an inclusive classroom or to find a job and communicate with their coworkers, but when it comes to social gatherings and face-to-face conversations, they are usually dependent on the presence of a small number of people who also know how to sign. Despite all the advances that technology and the medical field can offer, communication barriers make social interactions with people who are hearing and do not sign a strained affair and this profoundly deaf people (Jankowski 1997).

This communication barrier is one of the reasons deaf people tend to congregate with one another (Jacobs 1980). Members of the deaf community are commonly thought of as a group of people with similar cultural values and attitudes toward deafness, and a common language. This definition points out factors that can contribute directly to a person's over-all well-being. At the most basic level, deaf people come together because, psychologically and linguistically, such communion provides the most com-

portable environment in which to gain social gratification. This is the reason there are deaf clubs, deaf associations, deaf religious organizations, and deaf sport activities serving a variety of personal interests and needs of the deaf population (Stewart and Ellis 2005).

For many deaf adults, participation in deaf sport events is a major means of socialization. Deaf sport provides a place for meaningful interactions with others who communicate using sign language, an opportunity that is hard to come by in communities where the vast majority of people are hearing and communicate by means of a spoken language. Another benefit is psychological, as deaf people have an opportunity not only to be athletes but to be sports directors, event staff, and spectators. This type of participation strengthens their self-identity, enhances their self-esteem, and increases the confidence in maintaining a lifestyle that allows them to be contributing members of their community (Stewart and Ellis 2005). Moreover, participation to varieties of sport and competitions offers one of the significant opportunities to deaf people so as to help them to overcome psychological and physical problems.

Considering that sportive organizations take place in a social environment where evaluations such as favoritism/disfavoritism of other people, being criticized, not being approved etc. are observed, it is possible that sports people can have the fear of negative evaluation in such environments. For that reason, in addition to the fact that sport includes rehabilitative features for psychological problems of both disabled and non-disabled people, it will be beneficial to determine anxiety states of sports people that negatively affect them in training, competition environments and social environments. For this reason, it is necessary to conduct research on the perceptions of deaf sports people to understand their identities and the way to plan how their future will be shaped. In addition, trainers will be able to exhibit appropriate approaches towards sports people. Moreover the training process of deaf people can be created in the existing facilities. In the regulation of the school curriculum and in the personal development of the deaf, social and psychological feeling and behaviours towards them have created some of the negative effects of social anxiety.

To this end, this paper was conducted to determine how the fear of negative evaluation of

deaf football players is shaped by some variables.

## METHODOLOGY

The research pattern of this paper is a survey method which aims to generate information as well as describe characteristics of people, their past and existing behaviors.

### Research Group

The research population consisted of deaf sports people from 23 male and 13 female countries who participated in the 3rd European Deaf Futsal Championship held in Winterthur province of Switzerland on the 6th to the 14th of November, 2010. The present study is restricted with a total of 135 voluntary futsal players (11 male and 3 female countries). The minimum 55 dB of hearing loss in both ears was required for competition (Greydanus et al. 2009). The word "deaf" was used to define the sports people with this condition in this study.

Questionnaires and personal information forms were prepared in 8 languages (Turkish, German, English, French, Russian, Italian, Spanish and Swedish). Sign language translators helped sportspeople who had difficulty in understanding statements to fill questionnaires and personal information forms. The permission of chiefs of delegations and trainers was obtained before questionnaires were given to the sports people. Voluntary sports people were included in the study. Of the questionnaires, 93 were filled in sport halls when teams had no matches and 42 were filled in hotels. The data of 103 males from 11 countries and of 32 females from 3 countries were collected.

### Data Collection Tools

Questionnaire method was used as data collection instrument and the following scales were used socio-demographic data collection form which includes questions about 6 different variables (age, gender, educational status, communication methods, sports age and country).

The Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale - FNE was used in a lot of research and was found sufficient with its psychometric features (Orsillo 2001).

### *The Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (FNE)*

Watson and Friend (1969) developed the FNE concurrently with the Social Avoidance and Distress Scale (SAD) to assess individuals' experience of distress and discomfort in interpersonal interactions. Watson and Friend (1969) designated fear of negative evaluation as apprehension about others' evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively. Thus, the construct of fear of negative evaluation describes broad social-evaluative anxiety and the FNE assesses individual differences in this variable. The FNE is one of the most widely used measures of social anxiety (McNeil et al. 1995). The FNE contains 30-items and employs a true-false response format. Internal reliability is excellent (Cronbach's alpha = .94-.98) and 1-month test-retest reliability ranges from .78 to .94 (Watson and Friend 1969).

FNE was developed with 30 items initially. Leary (1983a) developed a brief version of FNE (BFNE) that is convenient for quick and repeated administrations. On this questionnaire, respondents rate the degree to which each of 12 statements applies to them on a 5-point Likert scale (1= not at all characteristic of me; 5 = extremely characteristic of me). Total scores range from 12 to 60. The items selected for inclusion in the BFNE had satisfactory item-total correlations with the original scale, ranging from .43 to .75 (Leary 1983a). The brief version of the scale also correlates highly ( $r = .96$ ) with the original scale (Leary 1983a; Westra and Stewart 2001) and the reliability of the BFNE has been established using non-clinical samples. A high level of internal consistency was obtained for the items comprising the BFNE ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .75 was found over a 4-week interval (Leary 1983a). The validity of the BFNE was supported through significant correlations with the SAD (Watson and Friend 1969) and the Interaction Anxiousness Scale (Leary 1983b). The short form version was used in this paper and Cronbach Alpha coefficients, calculated to assess the reliability of the scale, was found to be 0.82.

### **Data Analysis**

The obtained data were analyzed statistically by using SPSS program (15.0 version). Fre-

quency and percentages calculation were made to reveal dispersion of the research group according to socio-demographic variables. For the scores obtained from the scale, the independent samples (t-test) was used to evaluate the differentiation level based on independent variables. Multiple comparisons were tested by the Kruskal Wallis H test, which is a non-parametric test since the data belonging to the variables did not show normal distribution. Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) significance level was accepted to be  $p < 0.05$ .

### **RESULTS**

The ages of the participants varied between 18 and 39. The average age was determined to be  $24.49 \pm SD 4.43$ . It was found that; of the research group, 76.3 percent were male and 23.7 percent were female football players; 28.9 percent were secondary school graduates, 54.1 percent were high school graduates and 17 percent were university graduates. In their daily life communication, the methods that sports people used were found to be as follows: 23 percent used sign language, 1.5 percent lip read, 25.9 percent used sign language and lip reading, 11.9 percent used sign language and writing 15.6 percent used sign language and translator, 4.4 percent used sign language, lip reading and writing, 17.8 percent used sign language, lip reading, writing and a translator. It was found that of the research group 12.6 percent had played football for 1-3 years, 22.2 percent had played for 4-6 years, 20.7 percent had played for 7-9 years, 17 percent had played for 10-12 years, 27.4 percent had played for 13 and more years (Table 1).

The difference between the fear of negative evaluation of the research group according to the gender variable was found to be statistically significant ( $t = -2.073$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). It was found that FNE score means of females (Mean=30.90) were higher than those of males (Mean=28.05) (Table 2).

It was found that there was no statistical difference between the fears of negative evaluation of the research group according to the educational status variable ( $\chi^2 = .610$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 3).

According to the Table 4, statistically significant differences were found between the fears of negative evaluation when participants were compared according to the communication methods used with non disabled people ( $\chi^2 = 14.146$ ;

**Table 1: Demographic features of research group**

<i>Demographic features</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	103	76.3
Female	32	23.7
<i>Educational Level</i>		
Secondary School	39	28.9
High School	73	54.1
University	23	17.0
<i>Communication Methods</i>		
Using sign language	31	23.0
Lip-reading	2	1.5
Sign language- lip reading	35	25.9
Sign language- writing	16	11.9
Sign language- translator	21	15.6
Sign language- lip reading- writing	6	4.4
Sign language- lip reading- translator	24	17.8
<i>Sports Age</i>		
1-3 years	17	12.6
4-6 years	30	22.2
7-9 years	28	20.7
10-12 years	23	17.0
13 + years	37	27.4

$p < 0.05$ ). The highest score mean was obtained by the group using sign language and translator in communication (Mean=31.00), the lowest score was obtained by the group using sign language, lip reading and writing methods (Mean =22.42).

According to the Table 5, no statistically significant difference was found between the fears of negative evaluation of the research group according to sports experience ( $\chi^2 = 8.448$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Of the research group, those having 1-3 years of sports experience had the highest FNE score means (Mean =34.05) and those having 13 and more years of sports experience had the lowest FNE score means (Mean =27.72).

According to the Table 6, the difference between the mean scores of the fears of negative evaluation of the research group was found to be statistically significant as well ( $\chi^2 = 32.031$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). It was found that Swedish sports people had the lowest score mean (Mean =23.30). Swiss sports people had the highest score mean (Mean =34.00) in males and German sports people had the lowest score mean in females (Mean =28.16).

## DISCUSSION

In the light of the obtained findings, a statistically significant difference was found between the fears of negative evaluation of female and male sportspeople. The fears of females were found to be in higher levels than those of males (Table 2). Carleton et al. (2006) reported that the fear of negative evaluation especially results from concerns towards being humiliated, criticized or judged by others. Various discriminatory thoughts in society makes it possible to consider that over-protective or repudiative attitudes of parents on girls are one of the factors of this situation. Clinical tests and research has found that people with social phobia are over-protective, sensitive to others opinions and have social fears (Markway and Markway 2001).

In addition to the lack of confidence as a result of the abovementioned points, concerns of physical insufficiency could take place among the factors that affect FNE levels of female sportspeople. Because, a person who evaluates himself or herself and his or her performance negatively can believe that other people make the

**Table 2: Analysis on the research group according to the gender variable**

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t- test</i>	<i>sig.</i>
<i>FNE</i>	Male	103	28.05	6.39	-2.073	.040*
	Female	32	30.90	7.95		

\*  $p < 0.05$  SD= Standard Deviation

**Table 3: Analysis according to the educational status variable**

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Educational status</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t- test</i>	<i>sig.</i>
<i>FNE</i>	Secondary School	39	29.15	6.78	.610	.737
	High School	73	28.78	7.09		
	University	23	27.86	6.51		

SD= Standard Deviation

same negative evaluation as well (Clark and Wells 1995).

Moreover, according to the self-presenting model, it is assumed that social anxiety results from the desire of making a good impression on people and the concerns about not being able to achieve this (Leary 1983). At this point, thoughts such as "What if they don't like me?", "Will they find any faults in me?", "What if they don't approve of me?", "What if I do something wrong?" and the fear of not being able to make a good impression on other people (Dođan 2009) could stand out in females more than in males. Girls reported more total fears, fear of the unknown, fear of minor injury and small animals, and fear of failure and criticism than boys (Li and Prevatt 2010).

According to Schein (1989), deaf people feel the pressure of hearing people which is a phenomenon experienced since the first stages of their lives and they are still considered in a different way from hearing people who represent social norms.

The organizations for the sports participation of deaf people who have been ignored in society for a long term have started to get more active recently. Various research studies were conducted on the importance of the acceptance of sports as a tool to ensure the integration of disabled people into society. Because, sport enables the disabled to develop their physical, mental and social aspects and facilitates their integration with society (Eichstaedt and Lavay 1992).

Society has to incorporate hearing-impaired individuals in sports and recreation activities because this helps these individuals to develop healthier lifestyles in the course of time (Stewart and Ellis 2005). Participation in activities and sports helps individuals to understand and establish communication with their environment. Participation in sports activities has a prominent place in the Deaf community, with participants experiencing benefits not only in the physical sense but in other personal dimensions (Stewart 1991).

In a study conducted by Karademir (2011) on a total of 504 football players being 380 hearing and 124 deaf in Turkey, it was found that although score means of the fear of negative evaluation of deaf football players were higher, it was not statistically significant and thus no difference was found. In parallel, deaf people in

the research group obtained an awareness of their sportsman/woman (football player) identity which enables them to stand out with their sportsman/woman identity within society rather than being deaf and this improves their self-confidence. Considering that people with high self-confidence have low levels of social anxiety, it was reported that sports and sport activities help deaf people to cope with their disability, reduce their problems and have positive experiences in social harmony and positively contribute to self-respect of these people.

It is reported that people having high level of self-respect in communication with others are more successful, use verbal and non-verbal communication methods more efficiently and express themselves better. Those with lower self-respect prefer not to stand out while communicating with other people and exhibit avoidance behaviors more (Devito 1998). In a study conducted on deaf university students at California University, Jambor and Elliott (2005), reported that the students' acceptance of their disability and perception of themselves as a part of society significantly contributed to their self-respect.

Antia and Levine (2001) reported that a long term relationship brings along a common language and the preference of sign language usage. According to deaf people, this is not a disability but a socio-cultural situation. Most deaf people believe that the real disability is not the loss of hearing but attitudes and behaviors (Wentzel and Livadas 1995).

Deaf people mostly spend time together but do not communicate. Because deaf and hearing people tend to choose friends like themselves (hearing-hearing and deaf-deaf) (English 2002). Deaf people can consider themselves as a part and members of the society and compare themselves (emotionally and physically) with the members of the same group (deaf society and culture), thus they can have a positive attitude about themselves. According to researchers, the similar levels of the fear of negative evaluation of both groups (deaf and hearing football players) and the lack of statistically significant difference result from the comparison of members of the both groups with other members within the same group (Karademir 2011).

Deaf people consider themselves as members of a unique group, society and culture. However, hearing people consider the loss of hearing as a tragic medical case (Glickman 1996). This



assumption can bring along feeling pity for deaf people or humiliating them. Although they do not have any communication problems within their own group or communities, they are dependent on a few people who know sign language when they encounter other people within a social environment or when they are together with trainers in sports environment. This situation makes social interaction with others a serious and stressful relationship for the deaf.

As a matter of fact, the higher levels of the fear of negative evaluation of the group using only sign language or translator among communication methods with hearing community members indicate a significant relationship (Table 4). Being able to communicate with the skill of lip reading of deaf sportspeople helps them to have fewer concerns such as embarrassment, feeling ashamed, or not being understood or being criticized. The research results are in parallel with these comments.

Unconsciously created negative attitudes and behaviors of hearing society towards deaf people put deaf community members in a more difficult situation. Even the attitudes of parents not wanting to see their children being separated from society and pushing them into verbal communication can have negative effects on self-respect and self-confidence of deaf children. The research shows that children whose parents use sign language have more self-respect than children whose parents focus on verbal communication (Marschark 2007).

As opposed to children forced to use an oral only method of communication, a child who is taught to embrace their deafness and even become integrated into the Deaf community will learn that they simply have a different way of communicating, one that is no worse than audible communication. It is for this reason that parental attitude towards deafness has been shown to be such a strong indicator of self esteem in deaf children (Desselle and Pearlmutter 1997). For that reason, sport should be considered as a tool to ensure the integration of disabled people with society and give speed to this process and provide contribution to their socializing (Dunn and Fait 1997).

It can be seen that the levels of the fear of negative evaluation of sports people from various countries are different (Table 6). We can say that socio-cultural and communal conscious has an important place for attitudes and approaches

towards disabled people. In an educational sense, authorities should take necessary precautions to facilitate living conditions of disabled people whose presence cannot be ignored within society. The importance of signing is such that some researchers measure incidence of deafness by examining the number of deaf people in a population who use sign language. Werngren-Elgström et al. (2003) found that the incidence of signing deaf people in the county of Scania, Sweden, was 0.70 per 1,000 inhabitants. They noted that research focuses on the special needs of sign language users, and the impact of Deaf culture implies special consideration when it comes to criteria of inclusion and exclusion.

## CONCLUSION

This paper aims to determine how the fear of negative evaluation of deaf futsal players is shaped by some variables. Results in the present paper showed that the fear of negative evaluation of females were found to be in higher levels than those of deaf males athletes. The levels of fear of negative evaluation of sportspeople using lip reading communication method were found to be significantly low, and also communication ways with hearing people was a predicting factor and social culture, the manner of approach towards disabled people and the interactions in the countries of sports people resulted in differentiation in these anxiety states. Although deaf people gather and spend time within their own community, they encounter the fact of living together with hearing population of society and as human beings living in these communities they can be affected from external environment behaviors in a positive or negative way.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result, it can be recommended that more research is needed to determine the approaches towards deaf people in different countries. In future, Carrying out similar studies in varieties of Deaf athletes will contribute to the generalizability of the results.

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