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Psychological Stress Sources among Syrian Refugees Athletes in AL- Zaatari camp

مصادر الضغوط النفسية لدى الرياضيين من اللاجئين السوريين في مخيم الزعتري

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Abstract:

The purpose of the paper is twofold: first, to explore the psychological stress sources among refugees practicing sports activities in the AL-Zaatari camp, and second to find differences in those stress sources according to the type of sports variable. To achieve this, the researchers used the descriptive approach on a sample of (64) athletes. Due to curfew in the country and to reduce face-to-face interaction, an electronic questionnaire was built using (the Google questionnaire), which consists of (22) paragraphs that deal with the psychological stress sources among refugees. To achieve the study's objectives, the researchers used means, standard deviations, Alpha Cronbach coefficient, and One Way- ANOVA using SPSS version 24 with a confidence level of 95% ($p < 0.05$). The results of the study showed that the psychological stress sources came moderately, and the highest means reached (4.44) out of "focus on competition in the program (concern about winning)". In addition, there are no statistically significant differences in the psychological stress sources among refugees practicing sports activities in the AL-Zaatari camp.

Keywords: Psychological stress, Sources, Syrian refugees, AL- Zaatari camp, Athletes

المخلص :

الغرض من هذه الورقة ذو شقين: أولاً ، استكشاف مصادر الضغوط النفسية لدى اللاجئين الذين يمارسون الأنشطة الرياضية في مخيم الزعتري ، وثانياً إيجاد الفروق في تلك المصادر تبعاً لمتغير نوع الرياضة. ولتحقيق ذلك استخدم الباحثون المنهج الوصفي على عينة قوامها (64) رياضياً. ولتقليل التفاعل وجهاً لوجه ، تم إنشاء استبيان إلكتروني باستخدام (جوجل فورم) ، والذي تكون من (22) فقرة تناولت مصادر الضغوط النفسية لدى اللاجئين. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة ، استخدم الباحثون المتوسطات الحسابية ، الانحرافات المعيارية ، معامل ألفا كرونباخ و One Way- ANOVA باستخدام برنامج SPSS الإصدار 24 بمستوى ثقة 95% ($p < 0.05$). وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن مصادر الضغط النفسي جاءت بشكل متوسط ، وبلغت أعلى المتوسطات (4.44) للمصدر "التركيز على المنافسة في البرنامج (الاهتمام بالفوز) ، بالإضافة إلى عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في مصادر الضغوط النفسية للاجئين الذين يمارسون الأنشطة الرياضية في مخيم الزعتري.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الضغوط النفسية، المصادر، اللاجئين السوريون، مخيم الزعتري، الرياضيون

1. INTRODUCTION

The Syrian war constituted the largest humanitarian crisis in modern history. This war forced the Syrians to flee to several neighboring countries, such as Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan (Nola, 2020). This was also accompanied by many

stresses related to the war, such as imprisonment, destruction of homes, and the economy (Georgiadou et al., 2017). Alpak et al. (2015) indicated that (92%) of the Syrian refugees witnessed the death of a relative or family member and that (66%) of them saw or touched a dead person. On the one hand, the countries hosting these refugees have

resettled them in camps, which has led to many new stresses and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health problems (Kira et al., 2017). In addition to the difficulties of living after migration, isolation, and harsh economic conditions (Miller & Rasmussen, 2017). It also leads to loss of social life, discrimination, poor integration, non-employment, and uncertainty about refugee status (Kim, 2016; Tinghog et al., 2017).

As a result of these traumatic events, Syrian refugees may be at greater risk of emotional disorders, depression, and anxiety disorders (Alpak et al., 2015). Studies indicate that (34.7-65%) of them suffer from depression (Fuhr et al., 2019). Moreover, (36.15-65)% suffer from unspecified anxiety disorders (Tekeli-yesi, et al., 2018). In addition, suffering from anxiety disorders and depression is more than that of the general population by ten times (Ellis et al., 2014). Contributing to this is the detention of refugees in camps for long periods, and they have limited movement and mobility, which affects their social integration and thus negatively affects their mental health (Procter et al., 2015).

More than 25,000 Syrian refugees live in the AL-Zaatari camp near the northern border with Syria (UNHCR, 2019). In Jordan, it hosts nearly a quarter of the registered Syrian refugees in the region. The AL-Jbour & Sammour (2016) study showed that the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic symptoms came to a medium degree and that the majority of severe depression was (30.7%). Al-Asmer (2015) also indicates that the level of psychopathology went to a medium degree, where anxiety ranked first and at a high level. Also, (56%) of them suffer from

psychological distress (Basheti & Malas, 2015).

On the other hand, many Syrian refugees tried integrating into sports activities and participating in the Olympic Games. The last Olympic Games in Tokyo witnessed the participation of the Refugees Olympic team, and in Jordan, two football fields were opened in the AL-Zaatari camp in 2018. Practicing sports activities contributes to treating symptoms of (PTSD) (Rosenbaum et al., 2015).

The problem of the study began when the researchers reviewed several studies that dealt with refugees, most of which focused on psychological and health aspects, with the scarcity of studies that focused on refugees who exercised. Considering that sport is an essential resource that enhances the well-being of refugees and allows them to participate in positive psychological and social well-being. Thus, this study attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the psychological stress sources among refugees who practice sports activities in the Zaatari camp?
- 2- Are there any differences in these sources according to the type of sport variable?

2. MATERIAL & METHODS

To achieve the objectives of this study, we have been using the descriptive approach on (64) athletes. The sample was selected randomly from those who responded to participate in this study, as the study population was 85 athletes. Table 1

Table 1. Distribution of the study sample (n=64)

variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent %
age	less than 25	15	23.4

	greater or equal to 25	49	76.6
	Total	64	100
The type of sport	Taekwondo	34	53.1
	Football	12	18.8
	Athletics	18	28.1
	Total	64	100

Table (1) shows that: For (age), the highest category (greater or equal to 25) by frequency (49) with (76.6%), but the lowest categories (less than 25) by frequency (15) with (23.4%). Also, for (The type of sport), the highest category (taekwondo) by frequency (34) with (53.1%), but the lowest sort (football) by frequency (12) with (18.8%).

Due to curfew in the country and to reduce face-to-face interaction, an electronic questionnaire was built using (the Google questionnaire), consisting of (22) paragraphs that deal with the psychological pressure sources among refugees practicing sports activities in the AL-Zaatari camp. In addition, we used the fifth Likert scale to measure how teachers feel about each paragraph (table 2). This study was conducted in mid-October-2021.

Table 2. The estimation scale of the study sample responses

Tools	The response	Degree	Average	Level
Psychological pressure sources	Agree very highly	5	More than 4.20	Very high
	Highly agree	4	3.40- less than 4.20	High
	moderately agree	3	2.60- less than 3.40	Moderate
	Low agree	2	2.60- less than 1.80	Low
	Agree very low	1	Less than 1.80	Very low

To verify the validity of the study tool, the researchers presented it to a committee of (five) arbitrators with the competence and experience of the faculty members at the Universities of Jordan to find out the

suitability of paragraphs of this questionnaire and its ability to achieve the goal of the study. To verify the consistency of the study tool, the researchers used the Alpha Cronbach coefficient, where Cronbach alpha for the students' behavioral problems domain was found to be (0.90), and this value is considered a high indicator of the stability of the study tools (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

Domain	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient	Reliability level
psychological pressure sources	0.90	excellent

The participants' rights were protected by explaining the purpose and significance of the study. The clients were informed that their participation in the survey would remain anonymous and that their privacy was respected. They were provided with a comprehensive explanation that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Approval was obtained from all study participants when filling out the study tool. Accordingly, there was no need for support from the Ethics Committee at the Ministry of Education.

To achieve the study's objectives, the researchers used means, standard deviations, Alpha Cronbach coefficient, and One Way-ANOVA test using SPSS version 24 with a confidence level of 95% (($p < 0.05$)).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from (64) refugees practicing sports activities in the AL-Zaatari camp, contained in Table 4,

reveals the means and standard deviations of study sample responses about psychological pressure sources.

Table 4. Means and standard deviation for the psychological stress sources among Syrian refugees practicing sports in the Zaatari camp (n= 64)

Items	Mean	St. D	Rank	degree
Focus on competition in the program (concern about winning)	4.44	0.91	1	Very high
Failure to gain	2.66	0.89	22	Moderate
I do not feel the level progression	2.80	0.95	20	Moderate
Negative criticism from the public	2.86	0.94	17	Moderate
Negative criticism from colleagues	3.13	1.12	11	Moderate
Negative criticism from parents	3.13	1.13	11	Moderate
Negative criticism from the coach	2.92	0.98	16	Moderate
high anxiety trait	3.14	0.89	10	Moderate
fear of failure	3.03	1.14	13	Moderate
Parents' influence on their children's participation in sports	3.41	1.15	5	High
Not enough time	3.69	1.14	4	High
Not having fun	3.38	1.05	6	Moderate
Poor communication between the coach and the players	2.94	1.05	15	Moderate
Public and media criticism	3.00	1.07	14	Moderate
Overtraining stress	2.83	0.92	19	Moderate
Failure to reconcile training and life requirements	3.27	1.13	8	Moderate
lack of social support	3.17	1.06	9	Moderate
The feeling of the incompetence of the sports coach	2.70	0.99	21	Moderate
irregular daily life	3.36	1.19	7	Moderate
Malnutrition	3.91	1.06	2	High
Set ambitious goals that are greater than the athlete's capabilities	3.89	1.07	3	High
Weak relationship and communication between coach and player	2.84	1.17	18	Moderate
	3.20	0.50	*	Moderate

To find out the differences in the psychological stress sources among Syrian refugees practicing sports in the Zaatari camp according to the (The type of sport)

variable, the One Way- ANOVA) was applied to explore these differences. Table 5 shows that.

Table 5. The results of One Way- ANOVA to explore the difference in the psychological stress sources due to the type of sports variable

the origins of psychological stress	the variety of sports practiced	N	Mean	St. D	"F" value	Sig
	tackwondo	34	3.28	0.63	2.774	0.07
	football	12	3.33	0.22		
	Athletics	18	2.98	0.18		

By reviewing the results of the study, we find that the sources of psychological stress came moderate level, and the highest means reached (4.44) out of (5) for item (1) "Focus on competition in the program (concern about winning)" by high agreement degree, then item (20) "Malnutrition" by means (3.91), then item (21) "Set ambitious goals that are greater than the athlete's capabilities" by means (3.89) and the lowest means was (2.66) for item (2) " Failure to gain "by medium agreement degree. However, the total means reached (3.20) by moderate agreement degree in the sources of psychological stress among Syrian refugees practicing sports in the Zaatari camp. Also, there are NO statistically significant differences in the study tool due to the type of sports variable.the F ' value was (2.774) by significant (0.070). Al-Asmer (2015) indicates that the level of psychopathology went to a medium degree, where anxiety ranked first and at a high level. Also, (56%) of them suffer from psychological distress (Basheti & Malas, 2015).

The researchers consider that the focus and interest of the Syrian refugee on achieving win as the highest psychological stress

source is logical because he believes that this is one of the most critical resources for facing the conditions resulting from migration, such as the difficult economic conditions. As a result of these traumatic events, Syrian refugees may be at greater risk of emotional disorders, depression, and anxiety disorders (Alpak et al., 2015). Studies indicate that (34.7-65%) of them suffer from depression (Fuhr et al., 2019). Moreover, (36.15-65)% suffer from unspecified anxiety disorders (Tekeli-yesi, et al., 2018).

Where the Syrian refugee believes that engaging in sports and achieving a win in competitive sports will improve the economic aspect for him and his family, and this will facilitate his exit from the camp and isolation and achieving social integration with the society of the host country, where the Syrian refugee suffers from weak social integration and lack of employment as a result of migration. Thus, we see that the Syrian refugee is afraid of failing to win because this will increase their psychological stress levels, such as increased anxiety and symptoms of depression level. In addition, winning may help eliminate confinement in the camps and gain freedom of movement for the refugee. As for malnutrition as a source of psychological stress, it came in the second rank, and it is a logical result, as the Syrian refugee suffers from difficult economic conditions. Therefore his nutrition will be negatively affected, as the Syrian refugees depend on aid and material support provided by countries and humanitarian organizations.

For the Syrian refugee to achieve his goals related to improving his economic aspects and liberating himself from the restrictions imposed on him, we find that he sets goals

that exceed his athletic abilities and thus fails to achieve those goals and has experiences of failure. On the other hand, we find that parents may be a source of this psychological stress, as these parents believe that sports do not contribute to improving the economic aspects of their children and that practicing sports has no future. Therefore, parents direct their children to focus on work rather than exercise. It is made more difficult by negative criticism from family and friends. There is no doubt that the absence of statistically significant differences in the psychological stress level according to the type of sport is because all refugees are exposed to the same conditions resulting from migration. Therefore there is no preference for one sport over another. Although Jordan, in cooperation with international humanitarian organizations, Jordan built stadiums in the Zaatari camp, encouraged Syrian refugees to practice sports, and allowed them to participate in the Olympic Games held recently in Tokyo.

4. CONCLUSION

The researchers believe that this study contributed to providing knowledge related to the sources of psychological stress for Syrian refugees practicing sports. This would be a small contribution to bridging the research gap in this field. These results will also be available to those caring for Syrian refugees to consider them when developing appropriate strategies to confront psychological stress and help them provide psychological rehabilitation programs through employing modern psychological preparation methods such as mental visualization, positive self-talk, and writing future goals that correspond to their abilities. The researchers believe this will contribute to the well-being and development of the

psychological adjustment concept among Syrian refugees. The researchers recommend the possibility of conducting other studies related to the Syrian refugees who practice sports, such as the level of nutrition, training methods, and psychological support.

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