

## **Comparison of Attachment Styles and Emotional Intelligence Between Athlete Women (Collective and Individual Sports) and Non-Athlete Women**

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**Abstract:** Current study, has been performed to compare attachment styles and emotional intelligence between athlete women (collective and individual sports) and non-athlete women. Statistical population of this study, is comprised of all 250 athlete women (of both collective and individual sport who were exercising in the sport saloons of Ardabil city (Iran) within first 6 months of 2008. All non-athlete women of Ardabil in this age range were the normal population of this survey. Of this statistical population, 30 athletes of collective and 30 athletes of individual sports and 30 of non-athlete women were selected with simple random sampling. After sampling some demographic characteristics like age, education and record of sport activities were taken and questionnaires of attachment styles and emotional intelligence were completed by them. Results of Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) showed that there is statistically significant difference between mean scores of 3 groups in the secure attachment and emotional intelligence; however, there is not significant difference between 3 groups in the mean scores of avoidant insecure and ambivalent attachment styles. Results of LSD pursuit test also showed that, rate of secure attachment in the individual sport athletes was lower than collective sports. And also, emotional intelligence of individual sport's athlete was more than individual and it was higher for individual sport's athlete than non-athlete persons.

**Key words:** Attachment style, emotional intelligence, sport, athlete women, sport saloons, MANOVA

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of psychological characteristic, which is assumed that has relationship with sport behavior is the Attachment Styles. By definition, attachment is deep emotional relation that is being established with particular persons so that, it make us happy and cheerful when we cooperate with them and during stressful events it will make us safe and calmness seeing them around us. According to Balby's attachment theory, children establish an attachment relation with their caregiver during first years of their life. Balby differentiate 3 types of attachments styles: Secure attachment style is established when children understand in this manner that their caregiver is accessible and responder. This type of attachment, is characterized by a positive deep emotional relation between child and its caregiver. Conversely, children with avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles, understand that their caregiver isn't often accessible and responder or is totally non-responder. Children with ambivalent attachment style show dissatisfaction or distress toward their caregiver and group of avoidant style's children are characterized with lower affect and

avoidance of relation with caregiver. Some of studies have surveyed the effect of individual differences on the childhood's attachment styles in the broad domain of life. These domains include relation with coevals, siblings and friends, competition in the kindergarten, behavioral problems and behavior with unfamiliar adults (Cassidy and Shaver, 1999).

In recent decades-started with studies of Hazen and Shaver (1987) survey about attachment styles of adults has been greatly developed. Theoretically viewed, attachment styles of adults aren't related to the parents only, but also they are related to an extensive cycle of individuals. In this territory, attachment styles of adults have been assessed in relation to several variables, which varies from reaction to grief to function of romantic relations (Brennan and Shaver, 1995) from connection with God (Beck and McDonald, 2004) to supporting and seeking the stressful situation (Simpson *et al.*, 2002).

Several studies presented a theoretical model about attachment styles that provided the possibility of using this theory in the adults. This model differentiates 4 styles of attachment on the basis of 2 dimensions of self model (id EST. Does he/she is regarded as a person worth of

being loved and supported or not?). And model of others (do others are regarded as confident persons or not?). These attachment styles are: a person with secure attachment style is a person that has a positive image from itself and others and confide to others and regard social cooperation with confidence. A fearful attached person has a negative picture from him/herself and don't confide to others. These persons avoid interpersonal contacts. Dismissive attached persons have a positive picture from themselves and don't confide to others, these persons don't have stronger need for social contact. Finally, preoccupied attached persons have a negative picture from themselves but they rely on others, these persons have a preoccupation that if they have enough attraction for others or not (Cassidy and Shaver, 1999).

Furthermore, several studies support this theory that dimensions of attachment are static throughout the life and are appropriate predictors of type and quality of person's behaviors and relations. Feeney (2002) supposed that because attachment styles are the common responses of peoples to discomforts and dissatisfactions may have relationship with several predictor variables of correct behavior. These researches focused primarily on the substance abuse behavior and these results obtained that secure attachment style associates healthy coping style (problem oriented coping) and tipping, substance abuse and having multiple sexual partner have association with avoidant and preoccupied attachment style (Walsh, 1992; Brennan and Shaver, 1995).

Caspers *et al.* (2005) concluded that secure attached persons because of having a positive point of view about self and others effectively adjust their emotions with more probability, whereas insecure/dismissive preoccupied/insecure attached persons employ ineffective coping styles like suppression and separation to encounter negative emotions. This ineffective coping with negative emotions predispose them to higher risk of substance abuse. Huntstinger and Luekhen (2004) in a survey under the title of attachment styles and healthy behavior showed that persons with secure attachment show more healthy behaviors however fearful and preoccupied persons express less healthy behaviors. It should be noted that in these surveys behaviors like taking exercise, not smoking, not using substance and alcohol, driving with ordinary speed were regarded as healthy behaviors. Keelan *et al.* (1998) found that persons with secure attachment style had more intimacy familiar individuals and their spouse whereas persons with fearful, preoccupied and dismissive attachment style weren't so. Secure persons were telling more truths to their intimate friends and perceived more comfort from these relations.

Tidwell *et al.* (1996) concluded that in comparison with secure persons, ambivalent and avoidant persons had lower level of intimacy and happiness and lower tendency toward extension and developing of relations. Analysis of this survey showed that avoidant persons perform social actions with minimum level of contact and closeness with others. Also, secure attached persons were differentiated from other 2 groups dominantly in the romantic relations. And finally, ambivalent persons had more variability in comparison with 2 other groups.

Different surveys (Hofstra *et al.*, 2005) showed that membership in the group or working personally, in dependent to these attachment styles. Hofstra *et al.* (2005) have surveyed the relationship between attachment styles and attitude toward group (integrity, assimilation (assimilation of a foreign person in the group) and isolation) and obtained these results: Secure attachment style was positively related to all 3 variables (integrity, assimilation, isolation). Fearful attachment style had positive relationship with combination attitude and negative relationship with integrity and isolation attitudes. Dismissive attachment style had positive relationship with isolation attitudes and negative relationship with combination and isolation attitudes. Preoccupied attachment style had positive relationship with integrity and combination attitudes and negative relationship with isolation attitude. Tiryaki and Cepikkurt (2007) evaluated the relationship between attachment styles and group cohesion among women players of Volleyball major league and concluded that there is significant relationship between group cohesion and attachment style especially, a negative relationship was obtained between fearful attachment style and absorption to group. Moreover, there is significant positive relationship between person's scores in the group integrity and secure and preoccupied attachment styles.

On the other hand, in recent years this idea that emotional intelligence is an important aspect of health and as a common coping method has attracted extensive research interest. Of all new constructs which have been merged in recent decades in psychology whose goal is improvement of social adaptation, emotional intelligence has been more promising. Recently, social psychologists declared that emotional intelligence is as a major factor that determines the adaptive interpersonal relationships Simpson *et al.*, 2002). As a relatively new domain of contemporary psychology, several models about emotional intelligence has been presented but 2 dominant models have been recently merged that are different from each other theoretically and from the point of view measurement approaches. These 2 models are: Ability model, Mixed model (Mayer *et al.*, 2005). First model has

been presented by Mayer *et al.* (2002, 2005) who know the emotional intelligence as a set of abilities for understanding, internalization, understanding for precise and right processing of emotional information and management of emotions. This model focuses attention on importance of emotional information and using logic in encountering with this information. However, mixed model is a strict approach to emotional intelligence and suppose that emotional intelligence encompasses extensive set of abilities, social skills, dispositional traits and behaviors. Several studies have appraised the relationship between emotional intelligence and some of important life criterion and most of them have found significant evidences about this issue that emotional intelligence is as valid predictors for real outcomes of life (Ciarrochi and Deane, 2001).

In recent years, emotional intelligence has been emerged as an important aspect of mental health and common coping method and many studies have evaluated the relationship between emotional intelligence and some of important criterion (Ciarrochi and Deane, 2001). Emotional intelligence has negative relationship with depression, social anxiety and symptom reporting (Mayer *et al.*, 2005) and it has positive relationship with life satisfaction and better performance of assignments, less cognitive problems and bright thought during sport exercises. Totally, studies have shown that components of emotional intelligence are valid predictors of mental health indices and interpersonal function.

In recent decades increasing, interest has been attracted toward relationship between emotional intelligence and healthy behaviors and mental health. Emotional intelligence has negative relationship with psychological discomfort and has positive relationship with life quality and life satisfaction and strong social system (Austin *et al.*, 2004). Relationship between emotional intelligence and coping method is notable. In this context, it has suggested that emotional intelligence is as a coping mechanism that facilitates successful and effective self-regulation for interested goals (Mayer *et al.*, 2005).

Perlini and Halverson (2006) compared the emotional intelligence of hockey players and general population in a survey at 2006; Emotional intelligence in the players of hockey super league. They concluded that these players have a higher emotional intelligence than compared population and also emotional intelligence was positively related to their function in the game. In this survey, emotional intelligence was a important predictor of players' function.

Saklofske (2007) in a survey under the title of relationship between emotional intelligence, personality

and exercise concluded that emotional intelligence is the mediator of relationships between personality and exercise behavior.

Results of Saklofske' (2007) survey also, showed that there is significant difference between emotional intelligence of athlete and non-athlete persons. Also, results of this survey showed that level of interpersonal intelligence that is an component of emotional intelligence, is higher in the athletes of collective sport than individual ones.

Regarding present records and also, importance of these psychological components in the sport behavior, objective of this survey, is to compare attachment styles and emotional intelligence of athlete women (collective and individual sports) and non-athlete women. In this survey, following hypotheses was broached:

- There is difference, between attachment styles of athlete women of individual and collective sports and non-athlete women.
- There is difference, between emotional intelligence of athlete women of individual and collective sports and non-athlete women.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Subjects:** Statistical population of this study is comprised of all 250 athlete women of both collective (Volleyball) and individual (martial art) sport of age who were exercising in the sport saloons of Ardabil city within first 6 months of 2008. All non-athlete women of Ardabil were the normal population of this survey. Of this statistical population, 30 athletes of collective and 30 athletes of individual sports and 30 of non-athlete women were selected with simple random sampling and according to survey's subject, the method of this survey was causal-comparative.

### Measures

**Emotional intelligence questionnaire:** This test has 90 questions that measures 15 scales: Emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self regard, self-actualization, independence, sympathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationship, reality testing, flexibility, problem-solving, stress tolerance, impulse control, optimism and happiness. Responses have been arranged in a 5-degree scale in the Licket's spectrum (I absolutely disagree, I disagree, to some extent, I agree, I absolutely agree). Reliability, of this questionnaire has been calculated 0.93 for Iranian students through Cronbach's alpha Coefficient. Its re-test reliability (re-execution after 3 weeks) has been reported 0.68, too (Mayer *et al.*, 2002). In this survey, Cronbach's alpha Coefficient of test was calculated 0.79.

**Attachment styles questionnaire:** This questionnaire is a self-reporting tool that assess the attachment styles (secure and insecure) according to what children realize from attitudes and behaviors of parents toward them. This questionnaire encompasses 25 questions that each subject responds to them with Lickert's 4-degree scale (It is completely correct, It's correct, To some extent it's correct, It's almost correct, It's not correct at all). Following questions assess the secure attachment style: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 17, 21, 22 and 25 and insecure attachment style is assessed by these questions: 20, 23, 24, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 18 and 19. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this test was 0.81 in this survey.

**Data collecting method:** After referring to sport saloons of Ardabil city and selecting the statistical sample, then some demographic characteristics like age, education and record of sport activities were taken and 2 questionnaires were completed by subjects, respectively: Attachment styles questionnaire and emotional intelligence questionnaire. Obtained data were analyzed by Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

**RESULTS**

As is seen this Table 1 shows the Mean and Standard deviation of scores of 3 groups of subjects; individual, collective and non-athlete persons in the 4 dependent variables.

As is shown in the Table 2, there is statistically significant difference between mean scores of 3 groups in the secure attachment and emotional intelligence variables however this significant difference can't be seen between mean scores of 3 groups in the Avoidant insecure attachment and Ambivalent attachment.

Results of comparison between means of 3 groups in the secure attachment style variable showed that in the level of  $p < 0.01$  there is significant difference between 2 groups of athletes of collective and individual sports, as secure attachment style of individual sports' athletes was lower than collective sports, however, there was no significant difference between means of other groups. Results of comparison between means of 3 groups in the emotional intelligence showed that there is significant difference between means of athlete (individuals, collective) and non-athlete persons. Also, mean scores of 2 groups of athletes (individuals and collective sports) are statistically different. In general, emotional intelligence of collective sports' athletes is higher than individual sports and it is higher in the individual sports than non-athlete persons (Table 3).

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation of subjects scores in the variables being studied

Variables	Groups	M	SD
Secure attachment	Individual	3.90	1.78
	Collective	5.30	1.66
	Non-athlete	4.48	1.88
	Total	4.56	1.85
Avoidant insecure attachment	Individual	4.70	1.78
	Collective	4.10	2.00
	Non-athlete	3.90	1.83
	Total	4.24	1.88
Ambivalent insecure attachment	Individual	3.93	1.83
	Collective	4.63	1.92
	Non-athlete	4.03	1.78
	Total	4.20	1.85
Emotional intelligence	Individual	312.31	28.81
	Collective	331.48	33.43
	Non-athlete	301.96	26.36
	Total	315.16	31.71

Table 2: Results of multivariate analysis of variance for scores of three groups of subjects in the four studied variables

Variables	Groups	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	F	Sig.
Secure attachment	Individual	29.67	14.83	4.69	0.01
	Collective				
	Non-athlete				
Avoidant insecure attachment	Individual	9.7	4.85	1.38	0.25
	Collective				
	Non-athlete				
Ambivalent insecure attachment	Individual	8.56	4.28	1.25	0.29
	Collective				
	Non-athlete				
Emotional intelligence	Individual	13034.7	6517.37	7.41	0.01
	Collective				
	Non-athlete				

Table 3: Results of LSD pursuit test for comparison between mean scores of groups in the secure attachment style and emotional intelligence

Variables	Groups (I)	Groups (j)	Mean difference	SE	Sig.
Secure attachment	Individual	Collective	-1.40	4.35	0.01
		Non-athlete	-1.58	4.55	0.21
		Individual	1.40	4.35	0.01
	Collective	Non-athlete	0.81	4.88	0.08
		Individual	1.58	4.55	0.21
		Collective	-0.81	4.88	0.81
Emotional intelligence	Individual	collective	-19.17	7.60	0.01
		Non-athlete	10.34	7.60	0.01
		Individual	19.17	7.60	0.01
	Collective	Non-athlete	29.51	7.78	0.001
		Individual	-10.34	7.60	0.02
		Collective	-29.51	7.78	0.001

**DISCUSSION**

Attachment theory is a base for investigating the potential impacts of childhood's primary experiences with caregivers on the psychological function (like social adaptation, coping with disease, substance abuse) during adults. In this survey it was attempted to survey the relationship between attachment style and an important function (exercise) through comparison between attachment styles of collective and individual sports' athletes and non-athlete persons. Results of this survey showed that there isn't significant difference between these 3 groups in the insecure attachment style (avoidant

and ambivalent). However, there is significant difference between these 3 groups in the secure attachment style. No direct survey has been done about results of this research, however, previous surveys has shown that persons with secure attachment style perform more healthy behaviors than persons with insecure attachment style (avoidant and ambivalent). In this survey, behaviors like taking exercise, not smoking, not using substance and alcohol, driving with ordinary speed were regarded as healthy behaviors. According to characteristics of persons, with insecure style like (negative image from themselves, anxious and avoidant) it don't seem that they use an adaptively coping method like exercise and due to negative image from themselves and low self-esteem don't assimilate into groups and as was also shown in the previous surveys (Hufstra *et al.*, 2005), these persons have negative attitudes toward membership in the groups. However, persons with secure attachment style have properties that actuate them to performing health behaviors (for example, exercise). Results of comparison between means of 3 groups in the in the secure attachment style through LSD pursuit test showed that there is significant difference between 2 groups of athletes (individuals and collective sports), as secure attachment style of individual sports' athletes was lower than collective sports, however, there was no significant difference between means of other groups. Persons with secure style have a positive image from themselves and confide to others, with this features they have more interest toward establishing relation with others, hence, it is natural to tend dominantly to collective sports.

Another finding of this survey was that there is significant difference between emotional intelligence of 3 groups; collective and individual sport athletes and non-athlete persons. Results of comparison between means of 3 groups there is significant difference between mean scores of 2 athlete and non athlete groups. Also mean of 2 groups of collective and individual sports' athletes was statistically significant. In general, emotional intelligence of collective sports' athletes is higher than individual sports and it is higher in the individual sports than non-athlete persons. These results accord with result Perlini and Halverson (2006). Exercise numbered as a more powerful social factor that induces development of skills, values and social behaviors, as general assumption is that exercise is Character Building. Regarding this fact that emotional intelligence is assumed as a positive personality trait, higher level of emotional intelligence of athlete persons compared with non-athlete persons is probable. Emotional intelligence theory also provides a framework for assessing social and emotional adaptation

and includes abilities, skills and capacities, which are used for one's effective adaptation with interpersonal life, inasmuch as understanding the other's emotions, sympathy with them and establishing an effective relation with them is of main bases of emotional intelligence. Thus, regarding goal of sport as a cohesion-making factor, in the collective sports these skills of emotional intelligence is being practiced during exercise, however, in the individual sports there is no opportunity for this practice, hence, emotional intelligence of collective sports' athletes can be higher than individual sports. This explanation is approved by this point of view that emotional intelligence is dominantly a learned skill and is acquired through learning and practice.

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