

The impact of free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the effect of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons. A descriptive-analytical approach was employed, using a sample of 493 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons (Eshel, Balboua, Ramon, Ofer, and Fqma) during 2022–2023. The authors developed a 32-item questionnaire to measure the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety. Based on the findings, the overall impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons is high, with a response rate of 78.5%. Statistically significant differences were observed in the effect of sports activities on anxiety levels between married and single prisoners, with married prisoners benefiting more ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, based on the location of imprisonment, differences were noted in favor of Eshel prison regarding the impact of free sports activities on trait anxiety, Younger prisoners, particularly those under 25 years old, experienced greater reductions in trait anxiety, as did prisoners serving sentences of less than five years ($p < 0.05$). It is crucial that prisoners be encouraged to practice free sports activities due to their demonstrated positive effect on reducing trait anxiety. Regular sports activity programs should be implemented across all imprisonment centers as part of rehabilitation efforts to help reduce trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners.

KEYWORDS

Physical Exercise; Mental Health; Incarceration; Trait Anxiety; Coping Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era of rapidly accelerating change, despite vast technological advances and the expansion of digital communication, diseases have spread and epidemics have become rampant. The world has increasingly sought to classify diseases and their causes, with psychological disorders gaining significant attention from researchers and specialists.

Many scientists assert that psychological stress can threaten life itself, and among the most serious and dangerous psychological conditions affecting individuals is anxiety. Furthermore, Al Said (2015) describes the modern era as an era of individual and collective anxiety and tension, as the word anxiety has become the name of a pathological phenomenon that indicates a danger that threatens civilization, and this word has become, on the other hand, more common, which made scientists interested in it as a behavioral phenomenon and diagnosing it as a pathological condition and searching for methods of treating it.

In a homeland subjected to the longest occupation in history —Palestine— conditions that can lead individuals to experience anxiety arise daily. Al Nady (2015) points out that Palestinian prisoners are subjected to the most brutal forms of torture, abuse, and imprisonment in an unhealthy environment and difficult conditions. The helplessness and isolation that a Palestinian may be exposed to every day may make him suffer from anxiety that accompanies him on the journey of daily painful suffering as a result of the arbitrary measures that the occupation practices. There is no doubt that the most anxious groups are the Palestinian prisoners who are trying to find methods and ways to resist the psychological illnesses and worrying conditions that they may be exposed to through the arbitrary practices practiced against them by the occupation. Abu Dahu (2014) indicates that the occupation targets both the group and the individual, attempting to distract the individual from the group within families. Perhaps, practicing sports activities is one of the most important means that Palestinian prisoner's resort to during the days and years of imprisonment, trying through it to reduce the severity of psychological illnesses and pressures that overshadow their lives. As Kayyal (2018) mentioned, quoting prisoner No. (26/Jerusalem), the best thing he used to do to relieve anxiety in solitary confinement was practicing sports activities.

The subject of anxiety occupies an important aspect in modern psychological and educational studies and research, as it has been addressed by many psychologists, writers, and specialists in this field until it has become a subject with a significant impact on the individual's life in various aspects of his life. Anxiety is the distinguishing feature of many psychological and mental disorders, and

anxiety has gained great importance because man by nature fears the unknown and looks forward to the future. There have been many attempts by prisoners to escape from injustice, pressures, and fear of an unknown fate, either by digging tunnels or resorting to activities that reduce the pace of anxiety and raise their morale.

Regarding the study problem, it arose from the fact that the researchers are specialized in the field of sports, and two of them are former prisoners in the Occupation's prisons. During their imprisonment, they practiced sports activities and observed their importance and impact on anxiety levels and the psychological state of Palestinian prisoners who engaged in free sports activities. Motivated by the need to highlight this issue, ensure it receives the attention and follow-up it deserves, and to identify the effect of practicing free sports activities on the anxiety trait among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, the researchers decided to conduct this study.

This study sheds light on an aspect of the psychological suffering of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli Prisons. It may be linked to an attempt to penetrate the walls of the prisons to be a light that may illuminate a glimmer of hope for the prisoners with the outside and that their cause is still a priority for national work. This study may also help find solutions to the psychological conditions that many prisoners suffer from and guide them toward ways to overcome their anxiety. The scarcity of studies addressing the anxiety experienced by Palestinian prisoners may be due to the difficulty of reaching them and the occupation's attempts to isolate them from any scientific efforts aimed at addressing their concerns, alleviating their suffering, or connecting them with those seeking to highlight their experiences. Allawi (1998) indicated that the issue of anxiety is considered one of the psychological manifestations and occupies an important position in sports psychology due to its clear impact on the dysfunction of psychological and physical functions.

The study aims to determine the overall effect of such activities on reducing anxiety and to explore whether this impact varies according to key demographic and situational variables, including social status, place of imprisonment, age, and length of sentence. In line with these objectives, the study seeks to answer two central research questions:

1. What is the effect of practicing free sports activities on the anxiety trait among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in this impact, at a significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.05$ that could be attributed to differences in social status, imprisonment location, age, or sentence duration?

2. METHODS

2.1. Design and Participants

The researchers employed a descriptive-analytical approach, which was considered appropriate for the nature of the study. The sample was selected using a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation across different groups within the population. The study population consisted of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, totaling 2,470 individuals, according to the records of the Palestinian Prisoners Authority for the year 2020–2021. Details of the population distribution are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Study community distribution according to the prison location

Prison	Number of Prisoners	Percentage %
Eshel	90	3.64%
Gilboa	280	11.33%
Ramon	700	28.34%
Ofer	900	36.44%
Nafha	500	20.25%
Total	2,470	100%

Note. Some prisons (Al-Naqab, Megiddo, Hadarim, Hakodar, Ashkelon, Al-Ramla, Talmond) were excluded due to military measures by the Occupation Authorities and the inability to deliver the questionnaire

The study was conducted on a sample of 494 prisoners from the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons during 2022–2023. The sample was selected using a stratified random sampling method and represents approximately 20% of the study population. One questionnaire from Nafha Prison was excluded because it was not suitable for analysis, resulting in 493 valid questionnaires. Table 2 presents the distribution of the study sample according to the independent study variables.

Table 2. Study sample distribution according to the independent study variables (N=493)

Independent Variables	Variable Levels	Number	Percentage %
Social Status	Married	236	47.9 %
	Single	257	52.1%
	Total	493	100%
Imprisonment Place	Eshel	18	3.65%
	Gilboa	56	11.35%
	Ramon	140	28.39%
	Ofer	180	36.51%
	Nafha	99	20.10%
	Total	493	100%
Age	Under 25 Years	84	17.1%
	From 26 - 40 Years	155	31.4%

	Over 40 Years	254	51.5%
	Total	493	100%
Sentence Period	Under 5 Years	136	27.6%
	From 6 - 10 Years	195	39.5%
	Over 10 Years	162	32.9%
	Total	493	100%

2.2. Instruments and Procedures

The researchers designed a questionnaire to collect the necessary data from the study sample, aiming to achieve the research goals. The questionnaire was developed based on a review of relevant scientific references and previous studies. The instrument consisted of 32 items measuring the impact of practicing free sports activities on the anxiety trait among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Moderately Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree), with the highest score set at 5 and the lowest at 1. All items were positively worded.

Regarding the validity of the questionnaire, once the study instrument was designed, it was reviewed by six expert arbitrators holding doctorates in Physical Education, all of whom have over ten years of teaching experience at Palestinian and Jordanian universities. Their role was to assess the suitability of the items for the intended purpose, select appropriate items, and eliminate any that were deemed unsuitable. The experts confirmed the validity of the scale in measuring the impact of sports activities on the level of anxiety among Palestinian prisoners.

To verify the reliability of the instrument, it was administered to a pilot sample of ten recently released prisoners, who had been released within the past three months from various Israeli prisons and were not included in the main study sample. Internal consistency was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.85 for the overall scale, indicating good reliability that meets the purposes of the study.

The study procedures began with the formation of a team of assistant researchers, including students, prisoners' family members, and lawyers, whose identities were kept confidential to protect their privacy and avoid potential repercussions from the Occupation authorities. The study population and sample were then determined using data provided by the Palestinian Prisoners and Freed Prisoners Authority for 2022. A measuring instrument assessing the impact of free sports activities on the anxiety trait was prepared in accordance with the study's objectives and topic, after which it

was reviewed by a group of expert arbitrators and its reliability coefficient was calculated. The questionnaire was subsequently distributed in Israeli prisons through lawyers and family visits, and retrieved after 15 days via the same channels.

The study included both independent and dependent variables. The independent variables consisted of marital status, with two levels (married and single); prison, with five levels (Eshel, Gilboa, Ramon, Ofer, and Nafha); prisoner age, with three levels (under 25 years, 26–40 years, and over 40 years); and sentence period, also with three levels (under 5 years, 6–10 years, and over 10 years). The dependent variable was represented by the participants' responses on the anxiety trait scale employed in this study.

2.3. Statistical Analyses

To answer the study questions, the researchers used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program and applied several statistical procedures. Arithmetic means and percentages were calculated to assess the impact of practicing free sports activities on the anxiety trait among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons. The t-test was employed to examine differences in this impact according to the marital status variable. Additionally, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to investigate differences based on marital status, prison location, prisoner age, and sentence duration, with the Scheffé test applied for post hoc comparisons of means when necessary. For all statistical analyses, a significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.05$ was adopted to determine whether the observed differences were statistically significant.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With regard to the first research question (*What is the effect of practicing free sports activities on the anxiety trait among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons?*), the arithmetic means and percentages for each item, as well as the overall score, were used to assess the impact of free sports activities on trait anxiety. To interpret the results presented in Table 3, the following relative weights were adopted:

- 80% - higher: The impact of practicing free sports activities on the anxiety trait is Very High.
- 70 - 79.9%: The impact of practicing free sports activities on the trait anxiety is High.
- 60 - 69.9%: The impact of practicing free sports activities on the anxiety trait is Moderate.
- 50 - 59.9%: The impact of practicing free sports activities on the anxiety trait is Low.
- Below 50%: The impact of practicing free sports activities on the anxiety trait is Very Low.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons (N = 493)

Item No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage	Item Rank by Scale	Item Level
1	I believe that exercising will improve my mood.	4.67	0.64	93.3	1	Very High
2	I believe that sports help release my negative energy.	4.57	0.50	91.4	2	Very High
11	I believe that sports help me recover my vitality and energy inside the prison.	4.52	0.50	90.4	3	Very High
8	Exercise gives me a sense of relief.	4.50	0.54	89.9	4	Very High
14	Sports boost my immune system, helping me endure poor healthcare services.	4.49	0.57	89.9	5	Very High
15	Exercise boosts my self-confidence.	4.35	0.69	87.0	6	Very High
5	I believe that exercising reduces my anxiety.	4.19	0.93	83.9	7	Very High
6	I experience a negative mood when I am deprived of exercising by the prison administration.	4.08	0.90	81.7	8	Very High
32	The prison administration's control over exercise time in solitary confinement may affect the prisoner's mental state, increasing anxiety levels due to the irregularity of the sports schedule.	4.07	0.87	81.4	10	Very High
19	I feel angered by the harassments imposed by the prison administration when exercising.	4.04	0.96	80.7	11	Very High
21	I believe that having a group of sports specialists could help improve the field of sports within the prison.	4.03	0.87	80.6	12	Very High
29	Having sports competitions and rewards for these competitions may help reduce my anxiety.	4.02	0.82	80.4	13	Very High
30	I believe that exercising with a friend (partner) inside the prison helps reduce my anxiety levels.	4.01	0.95	80.1	14	Very High
16	The confined space in prison facilities increases my level of anxiety.	3.96	0.84	79.2	15	High
28	The nutrition in prison is generally insufficient to meet the prisoner's needs, which reduces my concern about my physical condition.	3.96	0.94	79.1	16	High
9	I feel anxious due to the lack of sports facilities inside the prison.	3.95	0.87	79.0	17	High
17	Consistency in exercise motivates me to overcome the obstacles imposed by the prison administration.	3.89	0.76	77.8	18	High
13	Sports help me increase my endurance against the measures imposed by the	3.84	0.96	76.9	19	High

Item No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage	Item Rank by Scale	Item Level
	prison administration.					
10	I believe that exercising helps adjust my emotions and control my behavior inside the prison.	3.83	0.87	76.6	20	High
7	I believe that not exercising affects my mood.	3.82	1.01	76.5	21	High
25	The physical strength and well-built bodies of some prisoners raise concerns for the prison administration.	3.81	0.97	76.2	22	High
31	Exercise reduces my level of emotional reactions toward other prisoners.	3.79	0.86	75.7	23	High
27	The harassments imposed by the prison administration during my sports activities annoys me.	3.77	0.95	75.4	24	High
4	Lack of exercise concerns me, leading me to blame myself.	3.77	0.99	75.3	25	High
3	I am greatly concerned with my lack of exercise.	3.76	0.95	75.3	26	High
26	A large number of prisoners turn to smoking as their anxiety rises, and I believe that sports help in fighting both anxiety and smoking.	3.71	1.19	74.2	27	High
12	I believe that the lack of exercise negatively affects my focus.	3.53	0.97	70.5	28	High
22	When I am transferred via the "Bosta" for several days, my mental state changes due to my inability to exercise.	3.49	0.87	69.9	29	Moderate
18	Lack of safe equipment and tools increases my fears of exercise.	3.49	0.96	69.9	30	Moderate
20	My anxiety level increases when I do not exercise in the morning.	3.32	1.05	66.3	31	Moderate
23	I feel the urge to exercise after a family visit.	3.20	1.07	64.0	32	Moderate
24	I believe that the prison administration permits prisoners to exercise in order to release their anger and psychological stress.	3.19	1.09	63.9	33	Moderate
Total Score		3.93	0.43	78.5		High

Note. The maximum response score is 5.

Table 3 shows that the impact of practicing free sports activities on the anxiety trait among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons is very high for the items (1, 2, 11, 8, 14, 15, 5, 6, 32, 19, 21, 29, and 30), where the response percentage exceeds (80%). The impact level is high for the items (16, 28, 9, 17, 13, 10, 7, 25, 31, 27, 4, 3, 26, and 12), with a response percentage ranging between (70.5%

- 79.2%). Meanwhile, the impact level is moderate for the items (22, 18, 20, 23, and 24), with response percentages ranging between (63.9% - 69.9%).

Moreover, Table 3 shows that the overall level of the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons is high, with a response rate of (78.5%). The researchers attribute this to the prisoners' strong engagement with the questionnaire, viewing it as a national duty that reflects their concerns and reassures them of others' interest in their cause. The highest-scoring item, Item No. 1, states, "*I believe that exercising will improve my mood,*" with a mean score of (4.67). This underscores the prisoners' emotional connection to physical activity and its role in improving their mental well-being. Al Mustafa (1996) indicates that students who have practiced sports activities have experienced improvements in their mood and emotional state.

Item (24) has received the lowest response level within the sample, with a mean score of (3.19). This item states that "*I believe that the prison administration permits prisoners to exercise in order to release their anger and psychological stress.*" The researchers attribute this finding to the fact that prisoners have been granted the opportunity to practice free sports activities only after taking protest actions. Additionally, when the prison administration suppresses them, it responds by locking down sections and denying them access to sports activities. Similarly, Sanchez-Lastra et al. (2020) agree that sports activities in prisons serve as a beneficial and practical strategy for prisoners.

The second research question was: Are there statistically significant differences in this impact, at a significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.05$ that can be attributed to differences in social status, imprisonment location, age, or sentence duration? First, to answer the question, the researchers used the t-test to determine whether the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons varies according to marital status. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons according to marital status (N = 493)

Marital Status	N	Mean	SD	T	p
Married	236	3.88	0.42	-2.16	0.03
Single	257	3.97	0.44		

Note. Statistically Significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

To address the second research question, the study employed the t-test to examine the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, considering marital status as a variable. The results revealed statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$, indicating that the effect of sports activities on anxiety levels varies between married and single prisoners, with married prisoners benefiting more. The researchers attribute this finding to the higher levels of stress and anxiety experienced by married prisoners, who face additional responsibilities toward their spouses and concerns about managing their personal affairs. Consequently, engaging in free sports activities plays a significant role in reducing their elevated trait anxiety.

To address the research question—whether there are statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons based on the prison location variable—the study employed a one-way ANOVA analysis along with mean scores. This approach was used to examine how the effects of free sports activities on trait anxiety vary according to the location of imprisonment. The findings of this analysis are presented below (Table 5 and 6).

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety by prison location (N = 493)

Prison Location Variable	N	Mean	SD
Eshel	18	4.19	0.45
Gilboa	56	3.92	0.42
Ramon	140	3.95	0.42
Ofer	180	3.88	0.44
Nafha	99	3.93	0.43

Table 6. One-way ANOVA results for the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety by prison location (N = 493)

Variable	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	f	p
Prison Location	Between Groups Sum of Squares	1.79	4	0.446	2.39	0.05
	Within Groups Sum of Squares	90.92	488	0.186		
	Total Sum of Squares	92.71	492			

Note. *Statistically Significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

Table 6 indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, attributed to prison location ($p = 0.05$). To identify the sources of these differences, the LSD (*Least Significant Difference*) test has been adopted for post-hoc comparisons between the means, as shown in Table (7).

Table 7. LSD post-hoc test results for the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners by age

Variable	Variable Level	Eshel	Gilboa	Ramon	Ofer	Nafha
Prison Location	Eshel		*0.272	*0.242	*0.315	*0.267
	Gilboa	*0.272-		0.030-	0.042	0.004-
	Ramon	*0.242-	0.030		0.072	0.025
	Ofer	*0.315-	0.042-	0.072-		0.047-
	Nafha	*0.267-	0.004	0.025-	0.047	

Note. * Statistically Significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

By examining Table 7, it is clear that there are statistically significant differences at the significance level ($p = 0.05$) in the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, based on prison location (Eshel, Gilboa, Ramon, Ofer, and Nafha), with Eshel Prison showing a greater effect. However, no statistically significant differences are found among the other prisons (Gilboa, Ramon, Ofer, and Nafha).

The researchers attribute this result to the fact that the sample from Eshel Prison had the lowest number of prisoners who responded to the questionnaire, with only 18 prisoners participating. Additionally, Eshel Prison is relatively stable in nature, allowing for more regular engagement in sports activities. Moreover, the prison sentences in Eshel are longer compared to other prisons, making free sports activities an effective means of reducing trait anxiety. The researchers also believe that the more stable the prison conditions, the greater the opportunity for the consistent practice of free sports activities, which in turn leads to a higher impact on reducing trait anxiety.

To address the research question—whether there are statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons based on age—the study employed a one-way ANOVA analysis along with mean scores. This approach was used to examine how the effects of free sports activities on trait anxiety vary according to prisoners' age. The findings of this analysis are presented below (Table 8 and 9).

Table 8. Descriptive statistics of the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons based on age variable (N=493).

Age Variable	N	Mean	SD
Under 25 Years Old	84	4.04	0.39
From 26 - 40 Years Old	155	3.92	0.43
Over 40 Years Old	254	3.88	0.44

Table 9. One-way ANOVA results for the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners by age (N = 493)

Variable	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	f	p
Prison Location	Between Groups Sum of Squares	1.56	2	0.78	4.19	0.02
	Within Groups Sum of Squares	91.14	490	0.186		
	Total Sum of Squares	92.70	492			

Note. * Statistically Significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

Table 9 indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, attributed to age variable ($p = 0.02$). To identify the sources of these differences, the Scheffe Test has been adopted for post-hoc comparisons between the means, as shown in Table (10).

Table 10. Scheffé test results for age-related differences in the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners

Variable	Variable Levels	Under 25 Years Old	From 26 - 40 Years Old	Over 40 Years Old
Age	Under 25 Years Old		0.116	*0.157
	From 26 - 40 Years Old	0.116-		0.040
	Over 40 Years Old	*0.157-	0.040-	

Note. *Statistically Significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

Table 10 shows that all significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety are between prisoners under the age of 25 and those over 40, in favor of prisoners under 25. However, no statistically significant differences are found between prisoners aged 26-40 years and those over 40 years. The researchers attribute this result to the fact that younger prisoners engage in different types of free sports activities compared to older prisoners, focusing more on enhancing their physical appearance, strength training, and various games. They also exert

higher effort during exercise, which has significantly contributed to reducing their anxiety levels. Furthermore, muscle-strengthening activities targeting major muscle groups should be practiced at least two days per week, as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020).

To address the research question—whether there are statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons based on sentence duration—the study employed a one-way ANOVA analysis along with mean scores. This approach was used to examine how the effects of free sports activities on trait anxiety vary according to the length of prisoners' sentences. The findings of this analysis are presented below (Table 11 and 12).

Table 11. Descriptive statistics of the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons by sentence duration (N = 493)

Sentence Duration Variable	N	Mean	SD
Under 5 Years	136	4.01	0.42
From 5 - 10 Years	195	3.92	0.45
Over 10 Years	162	3.86	0.41

Table 11. One-way ANOVA results for the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons by sentence duration (N = 493)

Variable	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	p
Sentence Duration	Between Groups Sum of Squares	1.73	2	0.866	4.66	0.01
	Within Groups Sum of Squares	90.97	490	0.186		
	Total Sum of Squares	92.70	492			

Note. *Statistically Significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

Table 11 indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, attributed to the sentence duration variable ($p < 0.05$). To identify the sources of these differences, the Scheffe Test has been adopted for post-hoc comparisons between the means, as shown in Table (12). Table 12 shows that the significant differences in the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety occur between prisoners serving sentences of less than five years and those serving over ten years, with the effect being greater for prisoners with shorter sentences ($p < 0.05$).

Table 12. Scheffé test results for age-related differences in the impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons

Variable	Variable Levels	Under 5 Years	From 5 - 10 Years	Over 10 Years
Sentence Duration	Under 5 Years		0.085	*0.153
	From 5 - 10 Years	0.085-		0.067
	Over 10 Years	*0.153-	0.067-	

Note. *Statistically Significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

No statistically significant differences were found between prisoners sentenced to five to ten years and those serving over ten years ($p > 0.05$) (Table 12). The researchers attribute this result to the tendency of younger prisoners with shorter sentences to engage in sports activities more regularly as their release date approaches, compared to those with longer sentences. As their release nears, their stress levels increase due to concerns about potential obstacles that could delay their freedom, which heightens their focus on reducing trait anxiety. Consequently, they turn to free sports activities as a primary means of alleviating their anxiety.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings related to the study's research questions, the researchers concluded that the overall impact of practicing free sports activities on trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons is high, with a response rate of 78.5%. Statistically significant differences were observed in the effect of sports activities on anxiety levels between married and single prisoners, with married prisoners benefiting more. Additionally, differences were noted in favor of Eshel Prison regarding the impact of free sports activities on trait anxiety, based on the location of imprisonment. Younger prisoners, particularly those under 25 years old, experienced greater reductions in trait anxiety, as did prisoners serving sentences of less than five years.

Based on these conclusions, the researchers recommend that prisoners be encouraged to practice free sports activities due to their demonstrated positive effect on reducing trait anxiety. Special attention should be given to promoting sports activities among single prisoners over 25 years old and those serving longer sentences. Regular sports activity programs should be implemented across all imprisonment centers as part of rehabilitation efforts to help reduce trait anxiety among Palestinian prisoners. Furthermore, researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies to shed

light on the psychological struggles of Palestinian prisoners and to counteract the enforced isolation that seeks to silence their cause and disconnect them from the broader Palestinian community.

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