

Examination of criminal liability and legitimate defense in sports operations and the incidents arising from them

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Criminal Liability, Civil Liability, Sports Activities, Incidents Arising From Sports, Self-Defense.

ABSTRACT

Criminal titles in penal laws have been categorized and specified, and attention to the principle of legality of crime and punishment has led to the determination of specific punishments for each crime. Perpetrators of each of the criminal titles are subject to punishment and are sentenced to the punishment prescribed by law by judicial authorities; however, there are exceptions provided in the law where the perpetrator of a criminal act, despite the criminalization of the act committed, may be exempt from legal punishment under specific conditions outlined in the law, thus no conviction is issued against them. Among these instances are sports activities and the incidents arising from them, which, based on clause "Th" of Article 158 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013, if the conditions specified by the legislator are met, the committed criminal act will not be punishable, and the criminal liability and civil liability of the perpetrator will be eliminated, and even compensation for damages by the perpetrator will not be required. Similarly, there is the concept of self-defense in sports, where upon meeting its elements, the criminal liability of the perpetrator is lifted, and their act is not punishable, and considering the effects of justifiable causes in lifting criminal liability, the defending individual will also not have an obligation to compensate for damages. Given the legal stipulation and upon meeting the conditions outlined in the law, the lifting of criminal liability occurs in sports activities and the incidents arising from them, and if the committed criminal acts occur outside of sports activities or if the incidents resulting from the criminal act occur in cases other than sports activities, the legal punishment will be applied to the perpetrator of the acts.

Introduction

The field of sports is a domain that attracts numerous audiences, enthusiasts, and followers. Various sports competitions not only engage participants but also draw many spectators to watch and follow the events. In this context, everyone observes the beautiful aspects of sports; however, they may be unaware of the crimes that can occur in the realm of sports or may not pay attention to them .

Some athletes, during their training sessions or competitions, commit prohibited strikes and movements, which constitute a crime. However, since these acts occur during sports activities, according to the law and upon meeting the conditions specified by the legislator, their criminal acts lack a criminal description and will not be punishable. Nevertheless, establishing the legal conditions to eliminate criminal liability and the imposition of punishment is essential. If their actions, even during sports activities, do not meet the legal elements and conditions, it does not prevent criminal liability, and they will be punished like other offenders .

The elimination of criminal liability for athletes during sports activities is realized through justifiable causes of crime (objective barriers), which absolves them of criminal responsibility. For this reason, no punishment will be issued against these athletes, and it cannot be applied. Another consequence of justifiable causes of crime is the elimination of civil liability, in addition to criminal liability, meaning that the athlete will not compensate for damages. Therefore, both criminal and civil liability are lifted from the athlete, and consequently, the responsibility of other individuals involved in the sports activities is also removed. Thus, if an incident occurs during sports competitions due to sports activities, and the act committed meets the legal elements and conditions, not only will the athlete causing the harm be absolved of responsibility, but also the referees, coaches, and other organizers of the competitions will be relieved of liability .

It is important to note that despite the presence of the mental element of the crime in the offending athlete, if they intentionally and outside the regulations, rules, and sports guidelines inflict harm on the injured athlete, the elimination of liability will not occur, and the offending athlete will be subject to punishment. Therefore, if the elements of intentional crime are established in the actions of the offending athlete, the legislator will punish the offending athlete just like other perpetrators of intentional crimes .

Among the issues addressed in this research is the concept of self-defense, which becomes relevant in sports operations and the incidents arising from them. According to legal texts and stipulations, self-defense, under certain conditions, prevents the execution of punishment against the perpetrator. This self-defense can be exercised by the athlete or by coaches, referees, or even other individuals involved in the competition in defense of another athlete.

With regard to the obstacles to criminal liability in the cases studied, compensation for damages resulting from sports injuries, in the event of a sports insurance contract, is the responsibility of the Medical Sports Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, up to the limits of the obligations stated in sports insurance policies. In the presence of a sports insurance policy, compensation for damages, payment of compensation, and even payment of blood money for disability and death resulting from sports accidents will be carried out by the mentioned insurer, unless the legal rules and conditions regarding the infliction of damage and injury have not been observed, in which case, compensation for damages will be the responsibility of the negligent person or persons.

.1.1 Background of the Research:

Many professors of criminal law and legal experts have elaborated on the types of criminal liability in the crimes committed by offenders, and books and articles have been published on this subject.

Esteemed professors such as Dr. Reza Nourbakhsh, Dr. Mohammad Saleh Validi, Dr. Iraj Goldoozian, Dr. Hossein Aghaeinia, Dr. Najad Ali Almasi, and other criminal law professors have left valuable works in explaining criminal laws, criminal liability, and other related discussions and topics. There are also articles available that research the effects of criminal liability in sports, which include the works of researchers such as Dr. Roozbeh Votoogh Ahmadi, Abdolhossein Aliabadi, Seyed Mohammad Hosseini, Elham Esghaqi, and Mohammad Ali Anisi, which are considered useful in this field; however, mentioning the names of other researchers does not fit within this brief article.

This research has specifically addressed the creation of criminal and civil liabilities in sports and has referred to the obstacles to criminal liability with examples in selected sports disciplines. Additionally, the causes of the removal of criminal liability in sports and its effects have been examined, as well as how civil liability is removed in sports accidents, and the concept of legitimate defense in sports has also been evaluated.

.1.2Research Method:

In this research, while explaining issues and providing examples in a case-by-case manner, various instances related to criminal liability, injuries, and accidents resulting from sports operations, as well as the causes of non-implementation of punishments, have been analyzed and examined using a descriptive-analytical method related to the research topics.

.2Generalities and Definitions:

a) Sports Law:

Sports law should be considered one of the newest branches of the legal system. This branch of law is a combination of sports and law, as well as a combination of civil law, criminal law, constitutional law (public law), basic rights, and business law within the realm of law. The legal and contractual dimensions, as well as the civil and legal relationships among individuals in sports matters, should be sought in civil law and business law, while the crimes committed in this field fall under criminal law. Legal protections and the relationships between individuals and organizations, and vice versa, should also be explored in public law. In fact, sports law is an integration of sports and public rights and private law, which has established a new branch in the legal system and is considered interdisciplinary between these two main aspects of law.

Professors and researchers have provided similar definitions of sports law. The esteemed professor, Dr. Hossein Aghaeinia, has stated: "Sports law is a set of regulations governing all matters of sports, including athletes, technical managers, spectators, sports management, sports physicians, manufacturers of sports equipment, and sellers of sports equipment, as well as employees of sports organizations. This is a general definition, meaning a collection of rules and laws governing all of sports." Another definition provided by the esteemed researcher, Roozbeh Votoogh Ahmadi, regarding sports law states: "Sports law is a systematic collection of regulations concerning the sports system and sports activities."

Sports operations:

Sports are defined as physical activities aimed at strengthening muscles, increasing physical ability,

improving health, enhancing physical capabilities, increasing defensive readiness, participating in sports and social activities, and creating competition. In 1992, the European Charter for Sport, under the supervision of the Council of Europe, provided the following definition for sports: "Sports encompass all forms of physical activities that, through random or organized participation, aim to express or improve physical fitness and mental health, shape social relationships, or achieve results in competition at all levels".

Sports activities can be divided into "individual and team" sports, each of which can be further categorized into "water, air, and land" sports .

Sports operations refer to activities that take place during a sport. Whether an individual engages in a specific sport personally or participates in sports activities under the supervision of a coach; whether they perform sports operations at a sports club or execute sports activities while participating in competitions .

Sports operations include "training, games, competitions, and any activities necessary for performing a specific sport." It is important to note that sports operations referred to in the law should include activities that are considered permissible sports activities and are approved by the laws, regulations, and bylaws established and ratified by sports organizations, and do not conflict with religious and legal provisions .

Sports incidents :

The sports incidents under discussion are, in fact, "incidents resulting from sports operations" and refer to events that occur during the performance of sports activities, in the location of the sport or competition, leading to injuries or bodily harm. This definition of sports incidents can, depending on the manner of occurrence and the conditions of the incident, be considered a crime and subject to punishment, or, based on existing laws, may lack criminal characteristics and not be punishable. In this regard, crimes against athletes, such as "fraud or collusion," and crimes committed by athletes against third parties, such as "spectators or referees," should be distinguished from sports incidents; because incidents occurring during sports operations, despite meeting the conditions outlined in the law, will not be punishable; however, when a criminal title is attributed to it and it incurs criminal liability, the perpetrator will be punished according to the law .

.1 Civil liability and criminal liability in sports law

a) Civil liability :

According to Article 1 of the Civil Liability Law ratified in 1960: "Anyone who, without legal authorization, intentionally or as a result of negligence causes harm to the life, health, property, freedom, reputation, or commercial reputation, or to any other right established by law for individuals, resulting in material or moral damage to another, is responsible for compensating the damages caused by their actions." Based on the aforementioned article, any individuals, whether natural or legal, who without legal authorization, intentionally or unintentionally due to negligence or fault as per Article 953 of the Civil Code, and as a result of carelessness, negligence, or failure to comply with laws and governmental regulations, cause damage to another person, will be liable for compensating the incurred damages.

Committing an act that causes damage can be in the form of an action or inaction, and as a result of this act, damages, whether material, moral, or physical, may be inflicted on the victim. It is necessary to establish a causal relationship between the two factors of damage and the harmful act; meaning that the damage incurred is considered the "effect" and the harmful act is the "cause of the damage." It is emphasized that the harmful act must be illegal or an act without legal authorization; therefore, if the damage is inflicted with legal authorization, or if it does not violate the laws and regulations of sports

relevant to this research, and also if it is not due to an incident that is beyond the control and authority of the perpetrator, it will not result in liability and compensation for damages.

Civil liability in sports can be divided into: "contractual liability and non-contractual liability".

-1a) Contractual liability: These are obligations that, in the form of contracts, compel the obligated person to fulfill contractual commitments, and it is an obligation that arises as a result of breaching the terms of the contract for the obligated person.

This type of contractual obligation is addressed in Article 221 of the Civil Code, derived from the noble verses: "O you who have believed, fulfill [all] contracts..." (Al-Ma'idah, 1) and "And fulfill [every] commitment. Indeed, the commitment is ever [that about which one will be] questioned." (Al-Isra, 34). In contractual obligations, by proving the failure to fulfill the obligation by the obligated party, civil liability is established, and the obligated person is compelled to fulfill their commitments.

-2a) Non-contractual liability: This is "breach of legal duties." The root of this liability is not the contracts made between individuals or between individuals and clubs, but rather the breach of law and legal duties that exist for all individuals.

In this instance of liability, legal duties are considered, and in the event of a breach of any of the specified legal duties, the individual will be liable for compensating the damages inflicted on the injured party.

b) Criminal liability:

When individuals commit acts that may cause harm or damage to others, and the act committed falls under the category of crimes, the principle of legality of crime and punishment becomes evident. Referring to Article 2 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013: "Any behavior, whether an act or omission, for which a punishment is prescribed by law is considered a crime"; in fact, considering this principle, the legislator has criminalized certain acts, whether acts or omissions, and has also prescribed punishments for these criminal acts.

If an individual commits a crime, they will only be subject to punishment for the crime if they meet the conditions specified in Article 140 of the aforementioned law. In fact, if the conditions mentioned in this article are met, "criminal liability" will arise; otherwise, they will be exempt from punishment or disciplinary punishments will be applied to them, which can be referred to the decisions made by the legislator for minors and adolescents in Article 88 of the mentioned law.

However, the conditions that result in an individual having criminal liability at the time of committing a crime are: "reason, maturity, and choice," which the legislator has specified in Article 140 of the aforementioned law regarding coercion in murder in the context of retribution.

By comparing this article in the Islamic Penal Code with Article 211 of the Civil Code, it can be observed that being rational and mature in the capacity for enjoyment and criminal liability are equivalent, and choice is another condition that is considered specific in both legal and criminal

matters; therefore, individuals who are minors or insane at the time of the crime will lack criminal liability, and punishment for the perpetrator of the crime will not be applied to them in all circumstances.

There are other obstacles regarding criminal responsibility that result in the elimination of a person's criminal responsibility, making the perpetrator of the criminal act undeserving of punishment, or the punishment of the main perpetrator of the crime, who meets all the conditions of criminal responsibility, not being applied to them. Among these obstacles, the existence or absence of "mental element" can be mentioned. If the mental element in the crime is established and the perpetrator has committed the crime with "malice," whether general or specific, they are deserving of punishment, and in the absence of the mental element, the three elements of crime become ineffective, and the commission of the crime does not materialize. In Article 144 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013, the legislator has stipulated in this regard and in intentional crimes: "In the realization of intentional crimes, in addition to the perpetrator's knowledge of the subject of the crime, their intent in committing the criminal act must also be established. In crimes where the occurrence is contingent upon the realization of a result according to the law, the intent of the result or knowledge of its occurrence must also be established." However, in unintentional crimes, based on Article 145 of the aforementioned law: "The realization of unintentional crimes is contingent upon establishing the fault of the perpetrator," which is stated in the note of the same article: "Fault includes both carelessness and negligence. Laxity, neglect, lack of skill, and non-compliance with governmental regulations, among others, are considered instances of carelessness or negligence as applicable."

The fault mentioned in the note of Article 145 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013 creates criminal responsibility in unintentional crimes, whereby the perpetrator becomes deserving of punishment for unintentional crimes. In the legal aspect of this issue, it is also necessary to refer to Articles 951, 952, and 953 of the Civil Code, where the legislator, after defining "transgression" and "negligence" in Articles 951 and 952, states in Article 953 of the same law: "Fault includes both negligence and transgression." Therefore, if a fault is committed by an individual and, as a result, damage is inflicted on another, their civil responsibility (legal responsibility) is established, and based on Article 1 of the Civil Liability Law ratified in 1960, they will be liable for compensating the damages incurred.

In sports operations and the incidents arising from them, the legislator, despite the existence of the mental element, exempts the athlete from punishment if the conditions are met and according to the law, which will be addressed in the relevant section.

Conditions for establishing criminal responsibility in sports:

To establish criminal responsibility in sports, the following conditions must be met:

1- The act committed must be against the law:

As previously stated, an act will be punishable if it is criminalized based on Article 2 of the Islamic Penal Code, and the principle of legality of crimes and punishments applies to it. In the discussion of establishing criminal responsibility in sports, it is necessary to consider the exception mentioned in clause (th) of Article 158 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013. Notwithstanding the aforementioned, if the act committed leads to a violation or breach of the law, it will result in the establishment of criminal responsibility in sports.

2- The perpetrator must have knowingly and willingly committed the criminal act:

If the perpetrator is aware of the criminal nature of the act, is informed of its consequences and effects, and intentionally commits the criminal act, criminal responsibility will be established. Therefore, intent in committing the criminal act and knowledge of its effects will render the athlete deserving of punishment.

-3Legal action regarding the committed crime must be possible:

In the event of a criminal act committed by the offending person, there should be the possibility of legal action. Therefore, if during a sports competition, one of the athletes causes injury to the physical integrity of the opposing athlete, if the matter falls under the exceptions mentioned in clause (Th) of Article 158 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013, there is no possibility of legal action regarding this criminal act.

-4p) Sports operations and sports disciplines lack official authorization from the relevant sports and legal authorities :

Permitted sports disciplines in the country are approved by the Ministry of Sports and Youth and are managed under the supervision of sports federations or associations recognized by the Ministry of Sports and Youth. Thus, there are times when a sports discipline is being conducted and executed in the country, but it has not been approved by the sports federations and the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and therefore, from a legal perspective, that sports discipline is not considered permissible .

For example, we refer to the sport of MMA (Mixed Martial Arts). Although this discipline does not have a long history like other martial arts such as karate, taekwondo, judo, and boxing in Iran, it has managed to attract many enthusiasts in a short period .

Until Farvardin 1400 (March-April 2021), not only had no license been issued for this exciting and dangerous sport, but in a circular issued in Mordad 1396 (July-August 2017), the Ministry of Sports and Youth declared this sport as one of the prohibited disciplines. In Farvardin 1400, the license for this sport was issued by the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and this martial art was included among the official disciplines of the Federation of Martial Arts Associations. However, the license for holding competitions in this sport in Iran, in a cage (octagonal ring), was not issued. Coaches of this martial art also operated under the names of other martial arts before the license was issued. With this in mind, sports operations in this martial art and the incidents resulting from it were not protected by law, and the offending athlete who caused injury or harm to another athlete was considered a criminal from the perspective of the judiciary. Even if we do not consider the committed crime as intentional, the crime committed against the victim in this martial art is classified as quasi-intentional crimes and carries criminal liability. However, after the issuance of the license in 1400, sports operations and the incidents resulting from them fell within the scope of clause "Th" of Article 158 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013, and the perpetrator was exempt from punishment .

Although since the middle of 1401 (2022), the license for this sport has expanded, the practice of this martial art and the participation of women in it remains prohibited, and if a female athlete in this sport causes injury or harm to her training partner, she will have criminal liability as well as civil liability, and criminal laws will not provide protection for this athlete.

.1Obstacles to Criminal Liability in Sports :

Despite the three elements of a crime, the perpetrator will be subject to punishment, as criminal liability is established; however, the perpetrator may have conditions that eliminate their criminal

liability. In fact, although the individual has committed an act that is considered a crime by law, due to the occurrence of certain conditions, the enforcement of punishment by the legislator is prohibited. These instances and conditions that prevent the punishment of the perpetrator are referred to as "obstacles to criminal liability".

Obstacles to criminal liability, according to some criminal law scholars, are divided into two categories: "justifying reasons for the crime (objective obstacles) and factors that eliminate criminal liability (personal obstacles)." Based on the views of some other legal scholars, they are categorized into three general groups: "justifying reasons for the crime, factors that eliminate liability, and legal excuses," and due to the significant similarities between the factors that eliminate liability and legal excuses, we have examined these two instances in one category.

a) Justifying Reasons for the Crime (Objective Obstacles): These refer to the reasons and conditions that justify the occurrence of a crime. Justifying reasons for the crime are not specific to any individual, and anyone who has justifying conditions for the crime at the time of committing the criminal act will be exempt from punishment. These conditions render the criminal act permissible and remove its criminal description, as if no crime had occurred at all, thus making the enforcement of punishment futile.

Justifying reasons for the crime not only eliminate criminal liability but also negate civil liability. Among the most important objective obstacles are: "necessity, consent of the victim, legal ruling, incidents resulting from medical acts, incidents resulting from sports operations, educational actions of parents, legal excuses, orders of a legal authority, altruistic motives, and self-defense".

b) Factors that Eliminate Criminal Liability (Personal Obstacles): These factors are dependent on the perpetrator and vary from one individual to another. In fact, the act committed by the perpetrator is considered a crime by law, but the perpetrator has conditions that exempt them from punishment. Personal obstacles only eliminate criminal liability, while civil liability remains intact. Factors that eliminate criminal liability do not render the criminal act permissible; rather, they are related to the perpetrator of the crime and result in the elimination of only that person's criminal liability.

The most important factors that eliminate criminal liability (personal obstacles) include: "minority, insanity, coercion, ignorance of the criminal nature of the act (ignorance of the subject of the crime), unconsciousness, sleep, and intoxication".

c) The Difference Between Factors that Eliminate Criminal Liability and Justifying Reasons for the Crime.

- 5-1- The causes that eliminate criminal responsibility are personal and depend on the individual, while justifying causes of crime are objective and do not pertain to the individual.
- 5-2- -1The factors that eliminate criminal responsibility relate to the specific ability and competence of the perpetrator; therefore, they have internal and personal roots. However, the justifying causes of crime arise from external factors and remove the criminal nature of the act.
- 5-3- -2In the factors that eliminate criminal responsibility, the mental element of the crime is not realized, but the mental element in justifying causes of crime is realized; however, the non-application of punishment is due to the necessity or compulsion of the law.
- 5-4- -3The factors that eliminate criminal responsibility are a general and universal subject, while justifying causes of crime require a specific and clear legal text.

- 5-5- -4When a crime is committed with the participation of several individuals, the factors that eliminate responsibility must be examined separately for each of them; because it may not include all accomplices and accessories in practice, but this issue does not apply to justifying causes of crime, and the elimination of responsibility from the perpetrator also eliminates the responsibility of others .
- 5-6- -5The factors that eliminate responsibility can remove criminal responsibility, but they do not eliminate civil responsibility, while justifying causes of crime eliminate both criminal and civil responsibility simultaneously .
- 5-7- In general, the main points of difference between justifying causes of crime and factors that eliminate criminal responsibility can be categorized as follows :
- 5-8- .1Difference in the personal and objective nature of the obstacles to criminal responsibility
- 5-9- .2Difference in the realization of criminal elements
- 5-10- .3Difference in the criminal responsibility of partners and accessories
- 5-11- .4Difference in the creation of civil responsibility
- 5-12- Sports operations and the incidents arising from them fall under the category of justifying causes of crime (objective obstacles) .
- 5-13- It was previously stated that justifying causes of crime refer to conditions that justify the occurrence of a crime and are not specific to any individual; in the context of this research, any athlete who, while possessing the conditions and justifying causes of crime, commits an act during sports operations that is considered a crime by law and causes harm or damage to another, will not be subject to punishment, and in addition to the elimination of their criminal responsibility, they will also not have civil responsibility regarding the compensation for damages incurred .
- 5-14- Conditions such as: "performing permitted sports operations, having a sports insurance policy, creating an incident during sports operations, and the legality of the sport" justify the occurrence of a crime during sports operations .
- 5-15- If the act in question is performed by another person or persons outside of sports operations, according to the principle of legality of crime and punishment, the perpetrator will be subject to punishment. However, if any athlete, possessing the aforementioned conditions, commits the mentioned criminal act, they will be exempt from punishment, and it will be as if the criminal act was not a crime in itself and a permissible act was performed .
- 5-16- .5Reasons for eliminating criminal responsibility in sports operations and the incidents arising from them :
- 5-17- For justifying causes of crime to eliminate criminal responsibility, there needs to be a specific and clear legal text. Because objective obstacles do not pertain to the individual, and if the external factors mentioned in the law arise, the criminal nature of the act is eliminated; therefore, any athlete who, by creating the external factors considered by law, commits an act that is considered a crime by law will be exempt from punishment .
- 5-18- -5-1Existence of legal text :
- 5-19- The existence of a specific and clear law will eliminate the criminal responsibility of the athlete in sports incidents, because the act they committed is based on the principle of legality of crime and punishment and Article 2of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013, which is a crime and subject to punishment. However, the legal text has made the committed act non-punishable .
- 5-20- Paragraph "Th" of Article 158of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013explicitly states that sports operations and the incidents arising from them are not subject to punishment, while also clearly stating the conditions for the athlete's exemption. The beginning of the mentioned Article 158states: "... committing an act that is considered a crime by law is not punishable in the following cases," and one of the cases that is not punishable in this article is sports operations, which is mentioned in paragraph "Th"; it states: "Sports operations and the incidents arising from them, provided that the cause of the incidents does not violate the relevant regulations of that sport and these regulations do not contradict religious principles".

-5-21 External conditions and factors mentioned in the law:

If the conditions stated in the law regarding injuries during sports operations or accidents resulting from them do not exist, the act committed will not be exempt from punishment. These conditions are enumerated in clause "Th" of Article 158 of the aforementioned law as follows:

- a) The cause of sports accidents should not be a violation of the regulations related to that sport.
- b) The regulations related to the sport should not contradict Islamic principles.

The conditions stated in the law are created as follows:

- a) The sport must be recognized by the competent authorities and be among the official sports.

Many sports disciplines operate in the country. The vast majority of these disciplines are licensed by federations or sports associations, as the Ministry of Sports and Youth has officially recognized them. In fact, the Ministry of Sports and Youth is the competent authority for issuing licenses for all sports disciplines, and if a license is issued for a discipline, part of the conditions for the implementation of clause "Th" of Article 158 of the Islamic Penal Code approved in 1392 will be established.

Between the years 1358 and 1368, for a period of about 10 years, the popular and beloved sport of boxing was declared banned in the country. In the years before the Islamic Revolution of Iran, this sport had many enthusiasts, athletes, champions, coaches, and referees, and the national team of this sport was officially sent to official competitions by the Physical Education Organization. This sport was licensed to operate in Iran in 1318, and in 1324, it officially joined the sports disciplines of the Physical Education Organization, and from that year, the Boxing Federation was established in Iran. Despite having an official federation and legal activity with numerous enthusiasts, after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the license for this sport was revoked, and it was declared a banned sport.

During the ten-year ban on this sport in Iran, boxing coaches continued to train secretly and without permission, and no official boxing matches were held in Iran; however, the number of athletes who were injured due to blows from this sport during training was not small; yet, no injured athlete was able to benefit from sports insurance during this time because the legislator did not support unofficial sports disciplines in Iran and did not consider those who caused injuries during sports operations and accidents resulting from this sport exempt from punishment.

After the legal obstacles to issuing a license for this sport were removed, in 1368, the official license for boxing activity in Iran was reissued, and the Boxing Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran officially and legally began its activities. From this date onward, injuries inflicted on individuals during sports operations and accidents resulting from this sport are not punishable.

Other martial arts disciplines have also had many enthusiasts over the years, but due to their unofficial status, they have been deprived of legal protections, and those who caused sports injuries in these styles and disciplines, like other criminals, had criminal and civil liability, which can be seen in kickboxing, Thai boxing, and similar disciplines, and previously, reference was made to the MMA martial art.

It should be noted that in the Ministry of Sports and Youth, a license for a sports discipline is issued only if it does not contradict the clear principles of Islam and is not prohibited by existing laws.

- b) The sport must have international and domestic laws and regulations.

In addition to the issuance of a license by the Ministry of Sports and Youth, the sport must have its

own specific laws and regulations, declare the permitted techniques, movements, and strikes of the sport, and establish a permissible range for training techniques and movements for coaches. Additionally, it must have specific judging regulations so that judges can distinguish between permitted and prohibited strikes and movements during competitions.

Since most of the examples in this research are dedicated to martial arts, we consider the organizing body of the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) competitions as an example for this section.

Currently, the UFC is regarded as the largest organization for holding mixed martial arts competitions and hosts the best MMA fighters in the world. The first event of the UFC competitions was held in 1993 in Denver, Colorado, USA. At the beginning of this organization's activities, minimal rules were considered for the competitions, and its heavyweight competitions lacked weight classes and were held in a cage set up on a platform. With the professional champions' enthusiasm for these competitions, gradually stricter rules were established for the athletes, and the UFC competitions are now held in 14 weight classes with specific regulations.

In the regulations of this sport, most techniques and strikes using hands, feet, combinations of hands and feet, and grappling techniques are allowed. However, the regulations established in this martial art prohibit the following strikes and actions: biting, inserting fingers into the opponent's eyes, striking the opponent's groin, pulling hair, headbutting, inserting fingers into any orifice of the opponent's body, striking the vertebrae of the spine and the spinal cord, downward strikes with the elbow joint, any type of strike to the throat, pinching or grabbing the opponent's flesh, grabbing the breast, and kicking or kneeing an opponent who is on the ground. With this in mind, the permissible sports operations in this sport and the unauthorized strikes are clearly defined, and if an athlete causes injury, harm, or even death to another athlete during sports operations or competitions in this sport, according to the laws of this organization, they have not committed a crime, and even their foul strike, if it does not violate the regulations, will not create liability for the striker. Given the exclusion of the obligations of insurance organizations in these competitions, this topic will be addressed in another section.

Despite the aforementioned points and a brief reference to the international regulations of MMA in the competitions of the UFC organization, this martial art in Iran must also have internal regulations established by the relevant federation, which must comply with global and international laws and ultimately be approved by the Ministry of Sports and Youth. In this case, it will include part of the conditions stated in clause "Th" of Article 158 of the aforementioned law.

P) The cause of sports accidents should not be a violation of the regulations related to that sport.

Sports accidents are an inseparable part of every sport, and athletes may suffer injuries or accidents during training sessions in clubs, personal training, or competitions. If these injuries and wounds are inflicted by one athlete on another, on one hand, it creates civil liability for the perpetrator regarding compensation for damages, and on the other hand, the act performed may be criminalized by law, which would also create criminal liability. However, if the accidents in question do not violate the regulations of that sport and the injuries and damages occur as a result of executing permissible sports movements, no punishment will be issued and executed against the perpetrator due to justifiable causes of the crime, based on clause "Th" of the aforementioned article. If the cause of the sports accident is a violation of the regulations related to that sport, both civil and criminal liability will be established against the perpetrator. For example, in taekwondo, kicking and executing techniques and foot

movements to the opponent's head are permissible and legal, and even in competitions of this sport, they carry high points and a score of 3. If the injured athlete is harmed due to one of the permissible foot and kick techniques to the head, the legislator will not punish the perpetrator, and based on legal text, this inflicted strike, which incidentally has a mental element as well, is not punishable.

Now, if the same injured athlete is on the ground and the executing athlete, knowing the injured athlete's defenselessness, intentionally violates the rules and, for example, strikes the injured athlete's head, in this case, they have clearly violated the sports regulations and will be liable. Depending on the type of crime committed, if the victim files a complaint, the judges of criminal courts in Iran will determine whether the committed crime is intentional or negligent.

Establishing regulations for each sport not only applies to athletes but also obliges coaches to teach permissible techniques and strikes to trainees and athletes, while prohibiting them from executing forbidden movements and techniques. Referees in sports competitions declare an athlete as the winner if they perform permissible strikes, and in the case of illegal strikes, they impose disciplinary penalties on the offending athlete, declaring them the loser of the match. In the mentioned example, in addition to creating civil and criminal responsibilities, referees confront the offending athlete with disciplinary penalties and declare them the loser of the match .

-5-21 The mental element in justifiable causes of the committed crime has been realized

Athletes, during sports operations and even in competitions, may inflict strikes on their opponents that cause injury. In executing movements, strikes, and sports techniques, the mental element is evident, and under this assumption, justifiable causes of the crime have been realized. With the establishment of the mental element, the three elements of the crime are completed, and the athlete's exemption from legal punishment arises from the necessity and compulsion of the law .

-5-22 The consent of the victim in operations, injuries, and sports incidents

In criminal law, the consent of the victim is examined in two parts :

- a) Consent after the occurrence of the crime against them
- b) Consent before the occurrence of the crime or concurrently with the occurrence of the crime

Each of the above cases has its specific effects and will not have the same effects as the subsequent instance, which I will address regarding consent in sports crimes .

- a) Consent after the occurrence of the crime against the victim

If consent is given after the crime by the victim, their guardian, or their heirs, it manifests its effects in two parts .

First part) In offenses subject to complaint :

According to Note 1 of Article 100 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013: "Offenses subject to complaint are those for which the initiation and continuation of prosecution and the execution of punishment depend on the complaint of the complainant and their non-withdrawal." Furthermore, based on Article 12 of the Criminal Procedure Code ratified in 2013: "The prosecution of the accused in offenses subject to complaint begins only with the complaint of the complainant and is suspended in case of their withdrawal." Also, considering paragraph "b" of Article 13 of the aforementioned law and Article 100 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013, in offenses subject to complaint, the withdrawal of the complainant or private claimant, as applicable, leads to the suspension of prosecution or the suspension of the execution of punishment. Therefore, if a crime occurs against an athlete and the elements of paragraph "th" of Article 158 of the aforementioned law are not present, if

the committed crime is one subject to complaint, based on the consent of the victim, a decision to suspend prosecution will be issued in favor of the offender .

Second part) In non-complaint offenses :

According to Note 2 of Article 100 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013: "Non-complaint offenses are those for which the complaint of the complainant and their withdrawal have no effect on the initiation of prosecution, investigation, and continuation of them and the execution of punishment." In fact, the consent and withdrawal of the victim will not lead to the suspension of prosecution or the suspension of the execution of punishment; however, based on paragraph "a" of Article 38 of the aforementioned law, it is considered a mitigating factor for punishment and, according to Article 37 of the same law, reduces prison sentences and fines or converts them into alternative punishments .

b) Consent before the occurrence of the crime or concurrently with the occurrence of the crime

What is noteworthy is the consent of the victim before or concurrently with the occurrence of the crime against them. Since the occurrence of a crime has adverse and destructive effects on society and disrupts or even destroys public order and security, the occurrence of each crime imposes various effects on society according to its severity and intensity, jeopardizing public order and security. Therefore, the legislator has not provided a basis for the consent of the victim before or concurrently with the occurrence of the crime; however, exceptions have also been considered in this regard, such as consent for medical treatments and surgeries and the consent of athletes in sports operations .

In regulated sports clubs, at the beginning of each trainee's registration, it is necessary for a specific registration form to be completed by the trainee or their legal guardian, which includes informing the trainee about the existence of sports injuries and damages during training or competitions. By completing and signing this form, informed consent is obtained from the registration applicant.

Participation in sports training, engaging in group activities at the club, reviewing techniques and strikes taught against a training opponent during practice, and also participating in competitions, establishes the athlete's practical consent regarding injuries, damages, and bodily harm. In fact, the athlete currently expresses their consent regarding incidents arising from sports activities before the occurrence of a crime. Obtaining a consent form before official competitions and even before international competitions, especially in sports that have the highest injuries and bodily harm, has become a common practice among the organizers of competitions.

The consent obtained from the athlete regarding incidents and injuries resulting from sports activities, as well as the justifiable reasons for crimes in sports operations, legally prevents and eliminates criminal liability. An athlete who causes harm to another athlete despite the stipulated legal conditions is exempt from punishment.

.1 Effects of Justifiable Reasons for Crimes on Athletes' Criminal Liability:

-6-1 Justifiable reasons for crimes eliminate both criminal liability and civil liability simultaneously.

When the legislator, by enacting a law, deems sports activities, injuries, and incidents arising from them, which are normally considered crimes, exempt from punishment, and justifiable reasons for crimes cause the committed act to lose its criminal implications and become permissible, then performing a permissible act is not subject to criminal liability or civil liability. On the other hand, when sports activities and the incidents arising from them are not punishable, it follows that they will also lack criminal and civil liability. Therefore, one of the effects of justifiable reasons for crimes is the elimination of criminal and civil liability in sports activities and the incidents arising from them,

provided that the conditions specified in the law are met.

-6-2 Justifiable reasons for crimes not only relieve the direct perpetrator of liability but also eliminate the liability of other individuals involved in sports incidents.

If the legislator considered sports activities and the incidents arising from them as absolute crimes, in the event of injury or harm, not only would the direct perpetrator and the one inflicting the blow be deemed criminal and subject to punishment, but the organizers of the sports competitions would also be liable for complicity in the crime, and the coach of the offending athlete would be considered at least an accomplice in the crime due to teaching sports techniques, providing combat plans, and competition strategies. However, justifiable reasons for crimes not only prevent the liability of the direct athlete but also, if the conditions specified in the law are met, exempt other individuals involved in sports incidents from prosecution, pursuit, and punishment, thereby eliminating their criminal and civil liability.

.2 Self-Defense in Sports and Sports Operations

One of the instances that can exempt the perpetrator from punishment is "self-defense." Self-defense is considered one of the justifiable reasons for crimes, and if proven, it not only eliminates criminal liability but also civil liability for the defender.

According to Article 156 of the Islamic Penal Code enacted in 2013: "Whenever an individual, in defense of their own life, honor, property, or personal freedom or that of another against any form of imminent or actual threat, commits an act that is considered a crime under the law, they shall not be punished if the following conditions are met:

- a- The act committed was necessary to repel the threat or danger.
- b- The defense is based on reasonable evidence or rational fear.
- c- The threat and danger did not arise from the deliberate actions of the individual or the defense of another.
- d- Resorting to state forces without delay is not practically possible, or their intervention would not effectively repel the threat and danger.

Note 1- Defense of another's life, honor, property, and personal freedom is permissible only if that person is a close relative of the defender, or the responsibility of defending them lies with the defender, or they are unable to defend themselves, or they request help, or they are in a situation where they cannot seek assistance.

Note 2- If the principle of defense is established but the conditions are not met, the burden of proving the failure to meet the conditions lies with the attacker.

Note 3- In cases of self-defense, blood money is also waived, except in cases of defense against an attack by a madman, where the blood money is paid from the public treasury".

Considering Article 156 of the aforementioned law, self-defense in sports operations and the incidents arising from them can be examined in two separate sections:

First section) Self-defense of the athlete in sports operations and competitions.

Second section) Self-defense of coaches, referees, or organizers of competitions on behalf of another athlete.

Each of the aforementioned sections has its own specific conditions, which will be briefly addressed.

First section) Self-defense of the athlete in sports operations and competitions:

In the course of a car racing competition, athletes exert their utmost effort to cross the finish line. Consider a scenario where one competitor, in an attempt to overtake the leading car, maneuvers in violation of regulations, deliberately trying to damage the leading athlete's car and create an accident for them, thereby attempting to eliminate the leading athlete from the race or to overtake them by causing a momentary stop due to damage to their vehicle. In this situation, the athlete who is facing an immediate threat or violation of their competitive space, in order to avoid colliding with the wall of the racetrack and to defend themselves, causes a severe collision between the two cars, resulting in the assailant's vehicle being damaged and the assailant also sustaining bodily injury. If the athlete who was attacked has adhered to the legal conditions of self-defense, they will bear no criminal or civil liability, and according to the mentioned article and its third note, not only will they not be punished, but they will also be exempt from paying compensation to the attacking athlete, and due to the permissibility of self-defense, they will not have civil liability regarding the damages to the attacking athlete's car.

But what conditions must be established in this example to prove self-defense?

- 1The individual is in a position to defend their life and property.
- 2The threat is imminent, and a crime is being committed against them.
- 3Their actions and control of the vehicle were necessary to prevent a collision with the racetrack wall.
- 4The control of the vehicle and the defense against the assailant were based on rational evidence and were confirmed by any expert in racing competitions as necessary to reduce damages and injuries.
- 5The attacked driver did not intentionally provoke the reckless driver's actions and was competing with other competitors in accordance with the competition regulations.
- 6At the moment of the incident, there was no possibility of seeking help from emergency or law enforcement personnel at the competition site, and they had no choice but to defend themselves.
- 7Ultimately, the defense executed by them was proportional to the committed crime and was not more severe than it.

Upon meeting these conditions, the defending driver, due to the presence of elements and conditions of justifiable causes for the crime, will have no criminal responsibility and will be exempt from any punishment. Therefore, the issue of self-defense for athletes during sports operations and the prevention of resulting incidents is relevant, allowing them to defend against danger, provided the conditions for self-defense are met.

Part Two) Self-defense of coaches, referees, or event organizers on behalf of other athletes:

Sports coaches are not only responsible for training athletes but are also obligated to ensure the safety of their trainees. Just as a coach must maintain the health of athletes through proper training and instruction, if they cause injury to their trainees due to improper and unstandardized training, they will at least bear civil liability and be responsible for compensating the damages incurred by the injured athlete or athletes.

If a coach, during sports operations, observes that one of the athletes is deliberately committing an

illegal and foul strike while the athletes are executing trained techniques and even sparring, they are obliged to defend the athlete who has lost the ability to defend themselves or who has sought their help, and if harm is caused to the attacking athlete in this situation, the coach will not bear any responsibility due to self-defense on behalf of another (trainee).

Referees in sports competitions may also be compelled to engage in self-defense on behalf of a competing athlete who has lost the ability to defend themselves. For example, the technique of shime (shime waza) in martial arts such as judo and jiu-jitsu is taught to choke the opponent by blocking their airway from the neck, and once this condition causes choking in the opponent, they must tap the tatami (the mat used for competition or training) three times to submit, thus losing the match. The winning athlete is then required to end their move and release the opponent to prevent unconsciousness and ultimately choking or death.

If a referee, during a jiu-jitsu competition, witnesses a situation where the winning athlete continues to choke the defeated opponent even after they have submitted and the referee has declared ippon, and the defeated athlete is becoming unconscious due to lack of blood flow to the brain, the referee is obliged to separate the two athletes to protect the health of the losing athlete. If, while intervening to stop the attacking athlete, the attacking athlete sustains injury, the referee will not bear any responsibility due to self-defense on behalf of another, as they are defending someone who is unable to seek help and has lost the ability to defend themselves. In this case, the referee has a duty to prevent the potential risk of death for the losing athlete. Therefore, self-defense in sports operations on behalf of another's life is also possible, and if all conditions are met, it will be supported by law.

.1 Sports insurance is responsible for compensating damages in sports accidents:

A question arises regarding the injuries inflicted on athletes during sports events and operations: who will be liable for compensating the damages incurred if an athlete, legally referred to as the victim, is harmed? If the athlete is the direct cause of the injury and the cause of the sports accident, not only is he exempt from legal punishment, but he also lacks criminal and civil liability; then who is responsible for compensating the damages to the injured party? If the responsibility for compensation falls on the injured party, no one would participate in sports and competitions. The answer is "sports insurance," which, based on its contractual obligations, compensates the damages incurred by the victim.

One of the important and fundamental requirements in sports is the existence of "sports insurance." "Sports insurance" is considered "mandatory insurance" issued by the Medical Sports Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran within the country.

According to Article 1 of the Insurance Law ratified in 1937: "Insurance is a contract whereby one party commits to compensate the damages incurred by the other party in the event of an accident or to pay a specified amount." Mandatory sports insurance is one of the instances of an insurance contract that must be concluded between all athletes and the Medical Sports Federation to cover medical expenses, compensation, blood money for disability, or death based on the insurance policy tariffs in the event of sports accidents and injuries during sports operations.

In this type of insurance, the athlete is the "policyholder," and the Medical Sports Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran is considered the "insurer," with the amount paid by the athlete for the issuance of the sports insurance card being the "premium," and the compensation for sports damages by the Medical Sports Federation being the "subject of insurance." According to Article 2 of the same law, the "sports insurance card" will be the written document of the insurance contract (insurance policy).

The "insurer" (Medical Sports Federation) in this insurance contract is obligated to pay the medical expenses of the injured athlete or compensation for sports injuries based on the tariffs and provisions

stipulated in the sports insurance contract in exchange for receiving the premium from the athletes. Payment of blood money for disability or death of the athlete, based on the tariffs of this insurance contract, is another obligation of the insurer. Sports insurance is a subset of "accident insurance".

Sports insurance is mandatory for all athletes, both amateur and professional, and coaches, managers of sports clubs, technical staff of sports venues, and sports teams must also have sports insurance.

In the event of sports accidents, if the injured athlete does not have sports insurance, the Medical Sports Federation will have no responsibility for compensating the damages, and the responsibility for the incident will fall on the injured person, the coach, the club officials, and the organizers of the competitions.

Since the crimes mentioned in clause "th" of way, and asserting that the responsibility for compensation lies with the injured party would lead individuals to avoid sports and competitions that may cause accidents. Therefore, the Medical Sports Federation, upon receiving the premium, commits to compensating damages up to the limit specified in the sports insurance contract, provided that legal conditions exist, and has made obtaining sports insurance mandatory for athletes.

The Medical Sports Federation, in its capacity as the insurer, has established conditions and tariffs for compensating damages and commits in the insurance contract that if athletes, based on clause "th" of Article 158 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013, cause injury to another athlete or suffer injuries, it will pay the medical expenses of the injured athlete up to the limit specified in the insurance policy or provide compensation for sports injuries and pay blood money for disability or death of athletes up to its commitment limit.

In international competitions, the organizing bodies also insure athletes against accidents arising from sports operations and competitions, and to enhance their credibility, they increase the compensation limits of the insurance as much as possible so that athletes and participants do not have concerns regarding compensation for damages.

Conclusion

If individuals, despite having reason, maturity, and free will, willingly commit an act that the legislator has deemed a crime and categorized as a criminal offense, they are deserving of punishment due to the existence of criminal responsibility and will be sentenced to the penalties specified in criminal laws. The presence of the three elements of a crime in the commission of the offense further completes this discussion, and upon establishing the three components of the crime, the perpetrator will be deserving of punishment.

In fact, the establishment of criminal responsibility in individuals leads to the issuance and enforcement of the designated punishment in criminal laws against the perpetrator in the event of a crime. In addition to criminal responsibility, compensating for the damages inflicted on the victim is also mandatory, and the offender, based on civil liability law, will be responsible for compensating the material and moral damages of the victim.

Failure to establish any of the conditions outlined in Article 140 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013 will result in the elements constituting criminal responsibility being rendered ineffective, and due to the absence of criminal responsibility, no punishment will be issued or enforced; thus, the lack of any of the conditions mentioned in the aforementioned article creates an obstacle to the establishment of criminal responsibility. Besides the contrary meaning of the mentioned legal article, obstacles to criminal responsibility are explained in Articles 146 to 159 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013; some of the obstacles to criminal responsibility are justifiable reasons for the crime that are not specific to any individual and are reasons and conditions that justify the occurrence of the crime, of which this research addresses two instances, one of which is mentioned by the legislator in

clause "Th" of Article 158 of the aforementioned law, referring to sports operations and the incidents arising from them.

Sports operations and the injuries, damages, and incidents resulting from them, if the legal conditions outlined in the Islamic Penal Code are met, are not punishable, and due to the justifiable reasons for the crime, the act committed by the athlete during sports operations is not considered a crime and is regarded as a permissible act, and the legislator does not consider incidents arising from sports operations punishable by law.

Another instance of justifiable reasons for the crime addressed in this research is self-defense, which the legislator has legislated in Article 156 of the aforementioned law.

Self-defense in sports is permissible and possible, and it has been examined in two general sections: the first section pertains to the self-defense of the athlete, while the second refers to the self-defense of coaches, referees, and organizers of competitions.

Despite the absence of any responsibility for athletes regarding the injuries and damages specified by the legislator, compensating for the damages of the injured athlete is a matter of consideration, and the Sports Medicine Federation, by entering into sports insurance contracts with athletes, coaches, club managers, and competition organizers, compensates for damages and injuries incurred during sports operations up to the limits of their obligations and pays for treatment costs, surgeries, disability, and the blood money for deceased athletes based on their contractual obligations.

Article 158 of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013, despite being criminal, are not punishable and do not create criminal and civil liability for the athlete; however, the damages incurred on the victim must be compensated in some

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