

Examination Of Physical Activity Levels Of University Students According To Social Appearance Anxiety And Attitudes Towards Sports

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the physical activity levels of university students according to their social appearance anxiety and attitudes towards sports. This study is a correlational research and participants were determined by convenience sampling method. The sample group of the study consists of a total of 421 students, 143 of whom are female and 278 of whom are male. The research was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Approval for the research was received from Mersin University social sciences ethics committee. Research data; It was obtained with a survey form consisting of personal information form, physical activity evaluation, social appearance anxiety and attitude towards sports scales. In the study, chi-square and anova analyzes were used to determine the differences between variables, and Pearson correlation and regression analysis were used to determine the relationships between variables.

As a result, physical activity levels of female university students are lower than men; there is a positive relationship between physical activity level and social appearance anxiety and attitude towards sports; it was determined that as the physical activity level increased, social appearance anxiety and attitude towards sports increased. University students' social appearance anxiety and their attitudes towards sports explain 52% of their physical activity levels. It was determined that the variable that most predicts physical activity level is attitude towards sports.

It is thought that the results of this study, which is limited to university students, will constitute a reference to the field of sports sciences as an original research. Taking these results as a reference, cultural, social and physical recreational activities that can positively improve students' attitudes towards sports can be organized. The effects of these activities on their attitudes towards sports, social appearance concerns and physical activity levels can be examined.

Keywords: Attitude Towards Sports, Physical Activity, Social Appearance Anxiety

INTRODUCTION

One of the main factors affecting the development of human beings, who are social beings, is social relations. With the beginning of life, relationships begin in a social world. Today, in addition to basic physiological needs such as shelter and nutrition, it is accepted that social expectations such as the pleasure of loving, being loved, belonging and success are as important as basic physiological needs (Ülkü, 2017).

Human beings need social, psychological, cultural and biological changes during the socialization process. All these changes occur spontaneously during the development process as a requirement of natural life. In this process, people's relations with those around them and the quality of these relations affect the socialization process and the level of socialization. Negative experiences or obstacles acquired during this process may make it difficult for people to socialize and may also cause anxiety-based experiences. There are many factors that affect anxiety. One of these is social anxiety. Social anxiety can be interpreted as the individual's worry about situations such as speaking, meeting, discussing,

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expressing expectations or demands, or the disturbing state caused by the thought of encountering such situations (Baltacı, 2010). Social anxiety is a state of constant fear of multiple situations in which one may be assessed by others; It is defined as the feeling of being humiliated, being ridiculed, and experiencing the feeling of fear due to these situations in one's life. Social anxiety is a persistent fear of multiple situations in which people may be reviewed by others; It is defined as people experiencing feelings of humiliation, ridicule and fear due to these situations. Social anxiety is defined as a state of constant fear of more than one situation in which people may be observed by others; people experience a sense of humiliation, ridicule and fear due to these situations.

Another type of anxiety that is considered in relation to individuals' social anxiety is social appearance anxiety (Yüceant, 2013). Social appearance anxiety is defined as the tension and anxiety people experience when their physical appearance is evaluated by other people. It occurs as a result of negative perceptions and judgments about the individual's body image and appearance (Doğan, 2010). In social life, how an individual is evaluated by others is very important. For this reason, individuals strive to leave an effective impression and perception on other people. Individuals who think that they do not make a good impression on other people and who are dissatisfied with themselves have higher anxiety than others. People want to know how they are perceived by others and want to leave positive impressions on others. In line with these desires, people regulate their behavior and establish relationships with other people (Telli ve Ünal, 2016).

Information can be obtained about people's attitudes by looking at their behavior or reaction in line with their wishes (Varol, 2017). Attitude is a phenomenon that is acquired through learning, directs the individual's behavior and can cause bias in the decision-making process. Attitudes form the basis for many thoughts and behaviors in an individual's mind. Attitudes contain cognitive, affective and behavioral factors that affect the direction and severity of individual behavior and shape the behavior of individuals. It is known that there is a relationship between attitudes and behaviors. Attitudes can generally be explained by observed behaviors (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1999). In addition, it is a fact known to everyone that sports have an important place in human life. Therefore, it is a fact that people have attitudes towards sports. People's attitudes towards sports may occur for different reasons. It is considered necessary to do sports and exercise for a healthy life (Türkmen, Abdurrahimoğlu, Varol ve Gökdağ, 2016; Müftüoğlu, 2023). Therefore, a positive attitude towards sports is important in order to keep young people away from bad habits and to keep them physically, mentally and socially healthy in their daily lives (Yasartürk, Calık, Kul, Türkmen ve Akyüz, 2014).

One of the methods people use to achieve the body shape they want is physical activity and exercises. People can aim to achieve a healthier body and a new appearance by participating in physical activity. Sports, which provides the opportunity to do such activities, plays an important role in keeping people healthy, successful, happy and keeping their moral strength high throughout their lives (Akarsu et al., 2023; Önal, Yılmaz, Kaldırım ve Ağduman, 2017). Since sport is a process that contributes positively to the whole life of people and improves it, people have the chance to achieve a new physical appearance through physical activities, and with this new appearance, they may also have positive thoughts about sport. It has been found that people who do sports experience less anxiety when evaluated by others compared to people who do not do sports. The anxiety people feel about their appearance is directly proportional to satisfaction and dissatisfaction; It has been determined that dissatisfaction increases anxiety, while satisfaction reduces anxiety (Öztürk ve diğerleri, 2018). It is thought that being dissatisfied with physical appearance will increase participation in physical activity, and people who have the opportunity to achieve a new appearance through physical activity will have more positive thoughts about sports. However, it has been determined that studies supporting this hypothesis are limited. When the literature was examined, the relationship between physical activity and attitudes towards sports (Singh ve Devi, 2013); the relationship between social appearance anxiety and physical activity (Alemdağ ve Öncü, 2015) there were studies where they were examined separately. There are no studies examining physical activity levels according to social appearance anxiety and attitudes towards sports. It is thought that the results of this study, which is an original research in this respect, will be a reference for the field of sports sciences.

The aim of this study is to examine the physical activity levels of university students according to their social appearance anxiety and attitudes towards sports.

METHOD

This study is a correlational research. The sample size should be 381 according to 95% confidence interval and 5% acceptable margin of error (Gay, 1996). The sample group of the study consisted of 421 students (143 female and 278 male) from Mersin University. Convenience sampling method was used in sample selection. The participants were informed by the researcher and voluntary consent was obtained from the students participating in the study. The average age of the university students who participated in the study was $21,94 \pm 2.30$. Approval for the research was received from Mersin University Social Sciences Ethics Committee. The research was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

Data Collection Tools: Research data; It was obtained with a survey form consisting of demographic information form, physical activity evaluation questionnaire, attitude towards sports and social appearance anxiety scales. Physical Activity Assessment Questionnaire (PAAQ); In our study, the short-form PAAQ developed by Craig et al. (2003) and whose Turkish validity and reliability ($r=76$) was conducted by Öztürk M. (2005) was used. In PAAQ, physical activities should be performed for at least 10 minutes at a time. In the last 7 days in the survey: Vigorous physical activity (football, basketball, aerobics, fast cycling, lifting weights, carrying loads, etc.), moderate physical activity (light load carrying, cycling at normal speed, folk dances, dancing, bowling, table tennis etc.) Walking and sitting times per day were questioned. The total physical activity score (MET-min/week) was calculated by converting the vigorous, moderate activity and walking times into MET, which corresponds to the basal metabolic rate, with the following calculations (Craig et al., 2003).

- Walking score (MET-min/week) = $3.3 * \text{walking time} * \text{walking days}$
- Moderate activity score (MET-min/week) = $4.0 * \text{moderate activity duration} * \text{moderate activity day}$
- Vigorous activity score (MET-min/week) = $8.0 * \text{vigorous activity duration} * \text{vigorous activity day}$

Total Physical Activity Score (MET-min/week) = Walking score + Moderate activity score + Vigorous activity scores.

While the physical activity levels of the participants were classified as "low, medium and high" according to the total physical activity score;

Physical Activity Levels:

1. Low level: below 600 MET-min/week.
2. Medium level: 600-3000 MET-min/week.
3. High level: above 3000 MET-min/week

Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS); It was developed by Hart et al. (2008) to measure individuals' social appearance concerns. The internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of the scale adapted into Turkish by Doğan (2010) was found to be .93. The reliability coefficient of the scale obtained through split-half test is .88. For this study, the scale internal consistency test (Cronbach's Alpha) was calculated as .93. The scale is a one-dimensional 5-point Likert type scale consisting of 16 items. The 1st item of the scale is coded backwards. High scores obtained from SAAS, which unidimensionally measures social appearance anxiety, indicate high appearance anxiety.

Attitude Scale Towards Sports: It was developed by Kocak (2014) to measure university students' attitudes towards sports. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .891. The scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale with a three-dimensional structure consisting of 22 items: psychosocial development, physical development and mental development. The Cronbach's Alpha

values for the reliability analysis of the scale for this study were 0.92 for the psychosocial development sub-dimension; 0.87 for the physical development subscale; It was calculated as 0.88 for the mental development sub-dimension.

Analysis of Data: Descriptive statistics were initially utilized in the evaluation of the data. To identify differences between variables, chi-square and ANOVA tests were employed, while Pearson correlation and regression analysis were used to determine the relationships between variables.

RESULTS

The results of the analyzes conducted in the research are stated in the tables below.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

		± Sd
Age		21,94±2.30
Size	Female	166,04±5,04
	Male	177,01±5,84
Body Weight	Female	57,57±7.91
	Male	71,42±10,39
Physical Activity		2742,63±1970,41
Attitude Towards Sports		1,94±0,63
Social Appearance Anxiety		32,52±11,95

The table shows that university students' physical activity levels are moderately active, their attitudes towards sports and social appearance anxiety are low (Table 1).

Table 2. Comparison of Students' Regular Physical Activity Status by Gender

	Regular Physical Activity		Pearson Cqi-Square	P
	Yes	No		
Female	60	83	3,661	0,035
Male	144	134		

The table shows that there is a difference between the regular physical activity status of university students and their gender ($\chi^2= 3.661$, $p=0.035$, $p<0.005$) (Table 2).

Table 3. The Relationship Between Physical Activity and Attitudes Towards Sports and Social Appearance Anxiety

	Social Appearance Anxiety	Attitude Towards Sports
Physical Activity	0.700**	0.563**

** $p<0,001$

It was determined that there was a high positive relationship between physical activity, social appearance anxiety and attitude towards sports (Table 3).

Table 4. Comparison of Students' Social Appearance Anxiety and Attitudes Towards Sports According to Their Physical Activity Levels

PA Levels	n	± Sd	Social Appearance Anxiety	
			F	P
<600	115	19,39±2,51		

600 -3000	166	31,80±6,39	385,154	0,01**
>3000	140	44,17±9,90		
Attitude Towards Sports				
PA Levels	n	± Sd	F	P
<600	115	1,37±0,36	134,495	0,01**
600 -3000	166	1,96±0,49		
>3000	140	2,39±0,57		

**P<0,01 level is significant.

The table shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the physical activity levels of university students and their social appearance anxiety and attitudes towards sports ($p<0.01$). It was found that students' high social appearance anxiety increased their physical activity levels ($F=384.994$, $p=0.00$, $p<0.05$) and students' attitudes towards sports increased as their physical activity levels increased ($F=134.495$, $p=0.00$, $p<0.05$) (Table 4).

Table 5. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	F	Sig.	R Square	Durbin Watson
Social Appearance Anxiety	93,596	7,013	0,568	13,347	0,000	227,310	0,000	0,521	1,80
Attitude Towards Sports	683,391	132,839	0,219	5,145	0,000				

There is a statistically significant positive linear relationship between physical activity and social appearance anxiety and attitude towards sports. Social appearance anxiety and attitude variables towards sports explain 52 percent of the change in physical activity. The most predictive factor for physical activity level is the attitude towards sports (Table 5).

In evaluating the data, primarily descriptive statistics were used. In the study, chi-square and anova tests were used to determine the differences between variables, and pearson correlation and regression analysis were used to determine the relationships between variables.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

It was determined that the physical activity levels of the university students participating in this research were moderately active and low in terms of their attitudes towards sports and the overall averages of the social appearance anxiety scale (Table 1).

According to the results of the research data, the relationship between students' regular physical activity and gender contains important findings. As can be seen from the chi-square test results, it was determined that men do more physical activity than women. Considering the social life and development of female students, it can be stated that women who lead a more passive life in almost all societies do less physical activity. These findings are similar to the study conducted by Alemdağ and Öncü (2015), which found that men's participation in physical activity was higher than women. Similarly, in a study conducted by Alemdağ (2013), it was concluded that men's participation levels in physical activity are higher than women. In a study conducted by Sözcü et al. (2006), they found that the physical activity levels of female students were lower than males, which also supports this study. Likewise; A study by Cengiz (2007) shows that male students' physical activity levels are higher than female students. Many studies on this subject reveal that there are significant differences between the participation of men and women in physical activity. Within the framework of the findings and the literature, it can be concluded that men are more active among university students. When the development of participation in sports on gender roles is examined, social values may cause men to see themselves as privileged and social institutions are also affected by this situation. Therefore, women who remain in the background in society may also remain in the background in the field of sports (Küçük, 2024). According to Hopkins

et al. (2022), factors affecting girls' participation in sports; expressed as peer, family, socioeconomic, environmental and other factors.

When looking at the relationships between the dependent and independent variables used in the research, a moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.56$) was detected between the level of physical activity and attitude towards sports. There appears to be a significant relationship between attitude towards sports and participation in physical activity. In the study conducted by Alp and Süngü (2016), it was found that there was a change in the attitudes of the students towards sports in the experimental group, where the program consisting of physical activity and sports activities was applied, and this change was statistically significant and this consistent with our study. In the study conducted by Singh and Devi (2013), it was concluded that students who do sports have higher attitudes towards sports than students who do not do sports. A high positive relationship ($r = .70$) was determined between the other variable, social appearance anxiety, and physical activity level. It is thought that because students attach importance to social appearance, they have a positive attitude towards physical activity in order to improve their physical appearance and therefore they engage in more physical activity. In their study, Alemdağ and Öncü (2015) found similar results indicating that there was a significant relationship between students' participation in physical activity and social appearance anxiety. Based on these findings, it can be stated that university-aged students have social appearance anxiety and that sports activities are an important factor in reducing this anxiety. It has been observed that individuals who regularly participate in exercise experience less social appearance anxiety (Doğan et al., 2022). In the study conducted by Özkan et al. (2021), it was observed that university students who did not exercise experienced anxiety related to their social appearance more intensely.

As can be seen from these findings, after the relationship analysis, it was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the physical activity levels of university students and their social appearance anxiety and attitudes towards sports. Significant differences were determined between students who participated in low levels of activity and students who participated in high levels of physical activity. It has been observed that students with high social appearance anxiety also have high levels of physical activity, and as their physical activity levels increase, their positive attitudes towards sports also increase. These findings include being dissatisfied with physical appearance as stated by Cox, (2002); It is similar to the results that it is a positive factor that increases participation in physical activity. Considering that the attitudes that shape individuals' behavior may have an indirect or direct impact on the activities to be carried out, it can be thought that the increased participation of individuals with high levels of social appearance anxiety in physical activity significantly affects people's attitudes towards sports (Altıntaş and Asçı, 2005; Önal et al., 2017).

The most important finding obtained from the research results was that, taking into account all factors affecting participation in physical activity, it was determined that social appearance anxiety and attitude towards sports variables explained participation in physical activity by 0.52. In addition, the fact that these variables explain the attitude towards sports to a greater extent reveals how much importance university students attach to sports. Attitude towards sports appears to be an important variable. Based on this, important variables affecting university students' physical activity participation have been determined. In Festinger's (1957) Cognitive Dissonance Theory regarding attitudes, it is stated that the relationship between attitude and behavior is bidirectional, therefore changes in behavior can lead to changes in attitudes. When similar studies were examined, Öncü and Güven (2011) revealed that participants who do sports have more positive attitudes towards sports.

Social appearance anxiety appears to be another important variable in physical activity levels. People who are dissatisfied with their physical appearance sometimes resort to renewal using different methods. Among these methods, participating in physical activity is perhaps the most used (Grogan, 1999). In a study, the results of a significant relationship between students' participation in physical activity and social appearance anxiety are similar to this study. Considering the relationship between participation in physical activity and social appearance anxiety, it can be said that participation in physical activity reduces social appearance anxiety (Alemdağ ve Öncü, 2015). When similar studies were examined, Altıntaş and Asçı (2005) found that participation in physical activity positively affected a person's attitudes, feelings and behaviors regarding their body.

As a result, physical activity (PA) levels of female university students are lower than men; there is a positive relationship between PA level and social appearance anxiety and attitude towards sports; it was determined that as the PA level increased, social appearance anxiety and attitude towards sports increased. University students' social appearance anxiety and their attitudes towards sports explain 52% of their PA levels. It was determined that the variable that most predicts physical activity level is attitude towards sports. Researched in this study limited to university students; No studies have been found examining the effects of social appearance anxiety and attitudes towards sports on PA levels. In this respect, it is thought that the results of this study will constitute a reference to the field of sports sciences as an original research. Taking these results as a reference, cultural, social and physical recreational activities that can positively improve students' attitudes towards sports can be organized. The effects of these activities on their attitudes towards sports, social appearance concerns and physical activity levels can be examined.

Authors' Statement of Contribution to the Article: Article Design: GK, YY; Data Collection and Processing: GK, EB; Statistical Analysis/Comment: GK, YY; Literature Review: GK; Article Writing: GK, YY; Consulting: YY

Conflict of Interest: The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Financial support: No financial support was received for the completion of this study.

Ethics Committee Approval: This study is in line with the Declaration of Helsinki.

Peer Review: After the blind review process, it was found suitable for publication and accepted.

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