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PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SHYNESS ACCORDING TO GENDER

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Annotation: It is known that feeling of shyness is an important factor that influences relationship among people. A number of studies have been done in order to make people more sociable, social and minimize this feeling or sense. In this context the aim of the research is to examine physical education and sport school students’ shyness levels in terms of exercise behavior levels. Method: The sample group of the study consists of 122 women and 190 men as a total 312 university students. Exercise Stages of Change Questionnaire (ESOCQ) and the Shyness Scale (SS) were used as data collection tools. The Kruskal-Wallis H and Mann Whitney U test were used to analyse data. Results: While the shyness levels of male university students in the study were found to vary depending on their stages of exercise behavior, it is appeared that similar differences have not been found among female students. It was determined that the shyness levels of the male students in the preparation stages of exercise behavior were higher than the shyness levels of male students in the passive and active stages of exercise behavior. The lowest level of shyness was determined by the university students in the active stage of exercise behavior. Conclusion: As a result of the research, it can be said that participation in physical activity helps male students to decrease their shyness levels. The male students’ behaviours in the passive stage of exercise behavior are lower than the male students in the shyness levels of preparation.

Keywords: Exercise, shyness, university student

Introduction

Physical inactivity among young and adult people is a serious cause for concern[1]. Physically inactive individuals stay away from many health-related benefits than physically fit ones[2,3]. In order to increase these health benefits individuals should be physically active by doing 20 minutes or more exertion per day or some bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that result in energy expenditure. While there are many factors that enable individuals to participate in physical activity (being healthy, losing weight, looking good, social interaction, being popular, etc.) [4,5], it is possible to talk about the factors that prevent them from participating in physical activity (economic situation of the family, sports environment, income situation, time, preparation for exams, etc.) [6,7]. It is possible to increase them, but with the numbers being limited, there are also studies showing that shyness affects this process [1,8–10].

As a social entity, each individual diversifies his or her life experiences through interpersonal relationships. One of the important factors affecting the relationship between persons is the shyness that can be defined as the feeling of apprehension and
restraint in the place where others are present[11]. However, establishing positive interpersonal relationships may not be an easy process for every individual. When the literature is examined, shyness seems to make this process difficult [12–20]. Shy individuals are characterized by reluctance to talk, avoidance of eye contact, excessive boredom, avoidance from the social environment, thinking that others do not care about their own opinions, and fear of being subjected to negative judgments by others [21,22]. Participation in physical activity has an important place in studies to facilitate the execution of this process in a healthier way [8,23]. For example, studies in the literature suggest that individuals participating in physical activity at an insufficient level are shier than individuals participating in regular physical activity[1,9]. Additionally, Bandura (1993)notes that being physically active has a positive effect on overcoming psychological and social problems. It is clear that it is necessary to conduct studies in order to minimize the shyness as a psychological problem.

From this point of view, the aim of this study is to determine the shyness levels of university students in Turkey according to their participation in physical activity.

**Method**

**Participants.** The study group of the research consisted of 122 women 190 men, with a total number of 312 physical education and sport school students who completed a questionnaire package that included Exercise Stages of Change Questionnaire (ESOCQ) and the Shyness Scale (SS). The sample group was just randomly selected from Karadeniz Technical University in Northeast Turkey.

**Procedures.** A questionnaire was used as a data collection method. The questionnaire is a commonly utilized data collection tool in quantitative research(25). The questionnaires were distributed after obtaining the necessary permits from university administration. The participation in the survey was voluntary.

**Instrument.** Exercise Stages of Change Questionnaire (ESOCQ); is four items measure which is developed by Marcus and Lewis (2003) to determine stage of exercise behavior of individual. ESOCQ is a binary type (yes/no) questionnaire. Based on their responses, they classified in five different stages by using a scoring algorithm. These are Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, and Maintenance. Among them, precontemplators and contemplators are physically inactive/passive, preparers are physically active but not at the recommended levels and individuals in the action and maintenance stages physically active. ESOCQ has been translated from English to Turkish and psychometric properties examined by Cengiz, Aşçi and İnce[27]. In this study, Turkish version of the ESOCQ was used for the Turkish students.

**Shyness Scale (SS):** first developed by Cheek and Briggs(1990) and then turned into Turkish in 2001 by Güngör. The scale in terms of retest reliability, the coefficient was calculated as .83 and the Cronbach Alpha coefficient regarding the internal reliability consistency as .91. Shyness scale items composed of 5-point Likert-type measure of 20 questions about how often individuals perceive themselves as shy. The highest score that can be taken from the scale is 100, the lowest score is 20. The high score indicates that the individual perceives himself as "shy"

**Statistical analysis.** The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics (Version 23.0 for Windows; IBM). Kruskal-Wallis H and Mann-Whitney U test were used to determine whether there were any significant differences between the means of independent/unrelated groups.

**Results**

When participation rates of physical activity are examined, it is seen that 40% of female students are not yet participating in physical activity (passive), 19% are in the preparation stage of exercise behavior and 41% are active stage of exercise behavior [Figure 1].
The Kruskal-Wallis test results of female students' shyness scale scores participating in physical activity at different levels are given in Table 1. The results of the analysis show that the scores of female students' shyness scale do not differ according to their level of participation in physical activity $\chi^2 (sd = 2, n = 122) = .31, p = .86$.

**Table 1**: The distribution of the SS scores according to stage of exercise behavior (Female)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Exercise Behavior</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>63.66</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>60.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When participation rates of physical activity were examined, 28% of male students were not yet participating in physical activity (passive), 17% were in preparation stage of exercise behavior and 55% were active stage of exercise behavior [Figure 2].
The Kruskal Wallis test results of male students scores participating in physical activity at different levels on the shyness scale are given in Table 2. The results of the analysis show that the scores of male students' shyness scale differ according to their level of participation in physical activity $\chi^2$ (sd = 2, n = 190) = 8.15, $p$ = .02. This finding suggests that participation at different levels in physical activity has different effects on shyness levels of male students. Taking into account the average of the groups, the highest level of shyness is seen among male students who are in the preparatory stage of participation in physical activity and passive and active stages of participants follow subsequently. According to the Mann Whitney U tests for this example, it is found that male students, who were in the preparation stage of exercise behavior were higher shyness average scores than male students in active stage of exercise behavior. The differences between the averages are statistically significant.

**Table 2:** The distribution of the SS scores according to stage of exercise behavior (male)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Exercise Behavior</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>101.69</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>115.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

In the study to determine shyness levels according to students' participation in physical activity, male students were more likely to participate in physical activity than female students. This result is similar to the results of previous studies and reports in this area [30–34]. Because of this situation of the girls, there are studies where only girls are investigated [35,36].

When we look at other results obtained from the research, it was found that the shyness levels of male students differ according to their exercise behavior levels. It was determined that the shyness levels of the male students in the preparation stage of exercise behavior were higher than the shyness levels of male students in the passive and active stages of exercise behavior. In order to make this difference, the persons in the preparation phase of exercise behavior should prepare themselves for interacting with the environment, this preparation makes them uneasy and in this process the thought of exposure to the negative judgments of others can be interpreted as the reason why their exercise behavior is shier in the preparation phase. The level of female students shyness found higher in the passive phase of exercise behavior, while the level of shyness decreased in preparation and active phase. However, this difference was not statistically significant.

Finally, a clear relationship between physical activity and shyness was found in this study. Moreover, Turkish physical education and sport school students are also consistent with the previous research among adolescents in the United States [8,37] and the Philippine [1] as well as among children [10] and college students [9] in the United States.

**Conclusion**

As a result of the research, it can be said that participation in physical activity helps male students to decrease shyness levels. In other words, the current study suggest that physically active Turkish students tend to feel less shy than their less physically active peers. Besides, the shyness level of male students in the passive stage of exercise behavior are lower than the shyness level of male students in the preparation stage of exercise behavior, but not participating in physical activity is not desirable.

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