

Analysis of Social Phobia Levels of University Students Who and Who Do Not Do Sports in terms of Different Variables

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the social phobia levels of university students studying in the Physical Education teaching department of Physical Education and Sports School and the Primary School teaching department of the Education faculty in terms of different variables. A total of 216 students studying at the departments of Primary School teaching and Primary School Physical Education teaching of Kahramanmaraş Sutçu Imam University participated in the study. 'Liebowitz Social Phobia Scale' was used in the study to determine the students' social phobia levels. The data obtained was analyzed through t test and ANOVA test. As a result of the study, a significant difference was found between social phobia levels in terms of the status of doing sports, type of school and gender $p < 0.05$, while no significant difference was found between social phobia levels in terms of the students' academic success $p > 0.05$.

Keywords: Physical education teaching, primary school teaching, university, social phobia.

1. Introduction

Social fears are normal feelings experienced by people in order to adapt to social situations. In spite of this, social phobia is the feeling of shame and intense fear of being assessed negatively by other people in social situations, thus it involves showing behaviors of avoiding such environments and it is accepted as a social mental disorder (Weitchen *et al.*, 1999). Social phobia, which presents it with the reactions of feeling anxious of and avoiding acts in social environments, is a common and serious mental health problem causing loss of performance. Its primary characteristic is feeling an obvious and continuous fear of social situations which may cause shame. The most common situations that trigger this are eating, drinking, speaking, writing in front of others, and meeting people who are accepted as authority and being watched while doing something (Dever, 2010).

Social phobia is feeling an obvious and continuous fear of being ashamed or being disgraced in social environments with the anxiety of being judged by others. It is a definition used synonymously with social anxiety disorder. People with social phobia show symptoms of anxiety as well as fear. Anxiety can take the form of a panic attack based on the situation (Keskin and Orgun, 2007).

If a person experiences intense anxiety and accompanying physical symptoms in most of the social situations that s/he is in, this situation is named as social phobia (Keskin and Orgun, 2007). Social phobia is an anxiety disorder of different levels of intensity. It starts in early childhood or adolescence and it is accompanied by depression as it advances (Brunello *et al.*, 2000). It can be seen between the ages of 15 and 25 when a person is faced with the society more frequently and when s/he is seen more in the society (Noyan & Sertel Berk, 2007). A great number of changes are experienced during university education which covers the period of time between adolescence and the period of reaching full responsibility and freedom. During this period of change, social phobia symptoms arise in a great number of students or existing symptoms increase (İzgiç, *et al.*, 2000).

During the university education which covers the last stage of adolescence, an individual goes into the effort of having himself or herself accepted by others as a self-governing person and showing himself or herself. Within this period, the quality of the impression a young person leaves on others is very important for him or her. Thus, an individual has very high expectations of himself or herself. If he or she cannot meet these expectations, his or her social anxiety levels will increase and social phobia will present. On the other hand, with university, an individual will enter an environment of the most intense socialization. An individual who cannot experience a positive socialization process here can develop difficulties of surviving difficult situations faced in the future, developing the feeling of self-confidence and thus identity confusion as a result (Gültekin and Dereboy, 2011). In this sense, social phobia has an important effect on education and employment (Wilson, 2005).

Speaking in front of an audience is the most common social fear of people with social phobia (Furmark, 2002). In their study, Stein *et al.* (1996) stated that almost one third of adults experienced extreme fear while speaking to a large mass (Stein Walker and Forde, 1996). A young person with social phobia is most of the time ashamed of even asking for support and avoids situations which require performance in front of people during his or her life (Karagün, 2008).

Sport is effective in both securing uniformity and solidarity and also in creating healthy individuals. Thus, we can say that there is a direct relationship between societal development and sports. When it is considered that those who do sports will have a healthier nature and the successes they achieve will bring the members of the society together, the effect of sports on societal development can be understood better. At the same time, sport helps the development of a balanced personality and contributes to people's staying away from extremism and bad habits. Sports also contribute to having positive social behaviors. In addition, since sports develop the awareness of being a team and working together and sharing, it helps people to be more successful in their social lives. Besides all of these, sports helps people to adapt to social life efficiently, rationally and in a balanced way by serving to develop the idea of equality, respecting the rights of others, working regularly, acting systematically, being careful and gaining an ability to plan and assess (Dever, 2010).

Thus, this study was conducted to determine the social phobia levels of university students who do and who do not do sports and to examine the social phobia levels in terms of different variables.

The study seeks answer to the following sub problems:

1. Do the social phobia levels of students differ in terms of genders?
2. Is there a change in social phobia levels in terms of departments?
3. Is there a difference in social phobia levels of students in terms of the status of doing sports?
4. Does the academic achievement of students affect their social phobia levels?

2. Material and Method

2.1 Research group

The universe of the study consists of 240 students studying at Sutcu Imam University School of Physical Training and Sports and 507 students studying at Sutcu Imam University Faculty of Education, while the sample consists of 114 students studying at School of Physical Training and Sports and 102 students studying at Faculty of Education.

2.2 Data collection tools

In the first part of the data collection tool, the students were asked 9 questions which were designed to find out socio-demographic features such as age, gender, level of income and academic achievement. In the second part of the data collection tool, Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale was used to determine the students' levels of social phobia.

2.2.1 Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS):

The scale developed by Liebowitz (1987) consists of 24 items, 13 concerning performance anxiety and 11 concerning social interaction, which measure total violence as well as fear of performance, avoidance of performance, fear of social interaction and avoidance of social interaction. The scale gives social phobic anxiety and social avoidance total scores. The scale has questions which assess fear or anxiety and avoidance behaviors. Each item is answered with a score between 0 and 3 in terms of fear and anxiety; fear or anxiety: 0=none, 1=mild, 2=moderate, 3=intense; avoidance: 0=none, 1=mild, 2=frequently, 3=generally.

The score a person can get from the scale is between 0 and 144. Higher scores mean more intense symptoms. LSAS is a reliable and valid scale which is treatment sensitive. The scale's reliability and validity was tested by Heimberg *et al.* (1999). It is a scale which assesses the social interactions phobic people have difficulties in. When the literature is reviewed, it can be seen that Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale was adapted to Turkish and tested for validity and reliability by Gümüş (1997) for the first time in Turkey and the scale was named as Self-Evaluation Questionnaire of Social Interactions (SEQSI). Cronbach Alpha value of the scale used in our study was 0,92.

2.3 Data collection

The sample of the study consists of a total of 216 university students studying at Kahramanmaraş at Sutcu Imam University School of Physical Training and Sports and Faculty of Education during the academic year 2014-2015. 89 of the students were female while 127 were male and the average of their ages was 22, 0694±1,65650. "Personal Information Form for Students" and "Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale" was administered on the students who volunteered to participate in the study. For the study, permission was obtained from the relevant institutions. The questionnaires which were filled in completely and correctly were assessed.

2.4 Data analysis

SPSS Statistical Program was used for the analysis of the data. After the frequency analysis of the participants' demographic features and their answers to the questionnaire were made, the data was analyzed for normality through One-Sample Kolmogorov Simirnov test and the data was found to have a normal distribution. Thus, the data was analyzed by Independent sample-t test and One-way Anova test which are parametric tests. The level of significance was accepted as $p < 0.05$

3. Findings

This study examines the association between the social phobia levels measured through Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale and the students' gender, the status of doing sports and their departments and in addition to this, whether this association differs in terms of academic achievement. 114 of the participants are students of Physical Training Teaching department while 101 are students of Primary School Teaching department.

Table 1: Classification of the students in terms of their socio-demographic features

<i>Variables</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	
Gender	<i>Male</i>	89	41,2
	<i>Female</i>	127	58,8
	<i>Total</i>	216	100
Department	<i>Physical Training Teaching</i>	113	52,3
	<i>Faculty of Education</i>	103	47,7
	<i>Total</i>	216	100
Income	<i>Very low</i>	9	4,2
	<i>Low</i>	23	10,6
	<i>Moderate</i>	124	57,4
	<i>Good</i>	54	25,0
	<i>Very good</i>	6	2,8
	<i>Total</i>	216	100
Academic achievement	<i>Low</i>	15	6,9
	<i>Moderate</i>	90	41,7
	<i>Good</i>	111	51,4
	<i>Total</i>	216	100
Age	<i>(1-18)</i>	85	39,4
	<i>(19-21)</i>	117	54,2
	<i>(22 and older)</i>	14	6,5
	<i>Total</i>	216	100
Do you do sports?	<i>Yes</i>	106	49,1
	<i>No</i>	110	50,9
	<i>Total</i>	216	100

According to Table 1, 58,8% (127) of the students are female and 41,2% (89) are male; 54,2% (117) are between 19 and 21 years of age; 52,3% (113) are students of the Physical Training teaching department while 47,7% (103) are students of the Primary School teaching department. 49, 1% (106) of the students do sports and 51,4% (111) think that they have good academic achievement. 57, 4% (124) of the students stated that they had moderate level of income. It can be seen that most of the families have moderate or less than moderate levels of income.

Table 2: Social Anxiety T-Test results of the students in terms of their genders

<i>Gender</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Male	89	20,5843	10,52466	-2,215	,028
Female	127	24,5512	12,07826		

($p < 0.05$)

Table 2 shows that female students have higher levels of social anxiety when the students are analyzed in terms of gender.

Table 3: Social Anxiety T-Test results of the students in terms of their departments

<i>Department</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
School of Physical training	113	37,7699	19,43212	-2,215	,001
Faculty of education	103	56,9417	18,46981		

($p < 0.05$)

As can be seen from Table 3, students of physical training teaching department had lower levels of social anxiety when compared with the students of Primary School teaching department.

Table 4: Social Anxiety T-Test results of the students in terms of doing sports

<i>Sports</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Yes	106	40	19,43212	-4,947	,001
No	110	53,5727	18,46981		

($p < 0.05$)

When Table 4 is examined it can be seen that the students who do sports have lower levels of social anxiety when compared with the students who do not.

Table 5: Social Anxiety One Way Anova results of the students in terms of their academic achievement

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Academic Achievement	<i>Intergroup</i>	848,098	2	424,049	,940	,392
	<i>Intragroup</i>	96045,23	213	450,917		
	<i>Total</i>	96893,32	215			

($p > 0,05$)

Table 5 shows that the social phobia levels measured by LSAS do not have an influence on academic achievement.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the social phobia levels of university students who are engaged in sports and who are not engaged in sports were examined in terms of different variables. The results showed that social phobia levels differed in terms of department, gender and being engaged in sports. This result is expected in line with the literature. In their study, Memik *et al.* (2010) showed that social phobia was associated with gender and the results of our study which showed higher social phobia scores in female students are parallel to the results of this study.

In a study by Tolulope and Olayinka (2009), women were found to have higher social phobia levels when compared with men. In addition, Witchen *et al.* (1999) found that social phobia was more common in women when compared with men (Witchen *et al.*, 1999). When social phobia is examined in studies of society, women are clearly seen to have higher levels of social phobia when compared with men.

However, it is known that men seek for treatment more than women and thus, social phobia prevalence is found to be higher in men in studies of prevalence conducted with clinical samples (Weinstock, 1999). This situation may be the result of men's social roles in society such as earning a living and earning money and being in more social environments and thus may have caused higher social phobia prevalence in men.

Memik *et al.* (2010) study did not show a significant association between academic achievement and social phobia and showed that social phobia levels did not differ in terms of academic achievement categories. The study of Gültekin and Dereboy (2011) showed that the presence of social phobia did not affect academic success negatively.

When the prevalence of social phobia was analyzed in terms of being engaged in sports, it was found that the students who were engaged in sports had lower social phobia levels when compared with the students who were not engaged in sports. In their study, Şahin and Tunçel (2008) concluded that since physical training teaching students had a sports culture and since they saw sports as a philosophy of life, they had lower social phobia levels when compared with the students of education faculty.

In their study, Tillfors and Furmark (2007) stated that although social phobia seems like a mild disease, its high prevalence among university students makes it necessary to take it seriously and they also mentioned the presence of effective psycho-social treatments. In addition, they concluded that it was necessary to inform young people with social phobia and thus it could be possible to prevent them from dropping out higher education (Tillfors and Furmark, 2007).

It is thought that the reason why the students of physical education and sports have low levels of social phobia is because many of them are athletes, they are engaged in sports and they can develop behaviors such as obeying the rules, acting together, having self-confidence and showing their abilities in competitions. According to these results, it can be said that sport affects levels of social phobia positively.

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