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Comparing the attitudes of students of faculty of divinity and faculty of education towards the physical activity

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to compare the attitudes of the students of the Faculty of Divinity and Faculty of Education towards physical activity. The sample of the research, with survey research design, consists of 360 students who are in preparatory and undergraduate education in the autumn semester of 2018–2019 in Mehmet Akif Ersoy University in Turkey. In the faculty of divinity, women were $n = 130$, 65.7% and men were $n = 68$, 34.3%. In the faculty of education, women were $n = 128$, 79% and men were $n = 34$, 21%. An independent t -test was used to compare the mean scores. From the results, it was understood that the attitudes of the faculty of divinity students towards physical activity were more positive than the students of the faculty of education. No significant difference was observed in intra-group comparisons of attitudes towards physical activity.

Keywords: Faculty of divinity, faculty of education, attitude, physical activity.

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1. Introduction

Obesity, one of the main agenda items in G20 Health Ministerial Meeting in Argentina in 4 October 2018, has reached threatening limits in global scale according the WHO studies. Around 2 billion adults are overweight and more than 650 million are obese in the entire world. According to Childhood Obesity Research in Turkey conducted in cooperation with WHO in 2016, 9.9% of the second-grade primary school students are obese and 14.6% are overweight. The figures are even more critic for the adults: According to 2017 data, 32% of the population over 19 years of age is obese. Triggering such chronic diseases as cardiovascular surgery, diabetics, hypertension, cancer and COPD, the obesity may cause disability and early death if it appears in childhood (Ministry of Health Turkey, 2018).

The benefits of being physically active extend beyond disease prevention and include improvements in general cognitive processing, as well as academic performance (Law, Hollar, Sklar & Sprague, 2018). Physical activity is an important determinant of both physical and psychological health. Regular physical activity exerts beneficial effects and prevents the progression of number chronic diseases. It promotes well-being and has a positive effect on both communities and societies. Unfortunately, more than 60% of adults worldwide fail to reach the recommended levels of physical activity (Gu & Baker, 2018).

Physical activity is both cheap and effective. That means for helping to prevent disease, improve health and wellbeing and promote integration and social interaction life (Miles, 2007). In 2008, benefits of exercises, minimized the possibility of hip fractures, reduced the level of depression and anxiety, and improvement in the positive reaction to stress and some aspects of mental functioning and the reduction of dementia and Alzheimer's disease, were explained by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008). In addition to health benefits, evidence suggests that people who are physically active for about 7 hours per week experience a 40% lower risk of dying early compared with those who are active for less than 30 minutes per week (Gu & Baker, 2018). The effectiveness of interventions to increase physical activity was accelerated by the growing awareness of a worldwide problem in overweight, inactivity and obesity (WHO, 2010).

The construct of positive attitudes towards physical activity in school life is utmost important given the increase in physical inactivity among people was emphasized. If we engaging children and adolescents in enjoyable physical activity and teaching them the skills related to developing and maintaining appropriate physical activity, schools could help future generations of adults avoid becoming so sedentary.

There are many factors that may influence person attitude. The key issue in scientific research is to identify and understand how these factors influence positive attitude. If we present a quality environment in which students feel comfortable and confident, it will enhance positive attitudes towards the subject matter (Graham, Holt/Hale & Parker, 2004). The enhancement of positive attitudes, therefore, is one of the key components that impacts student learning. The person who feels confident and comfortable in the sport areas is bound to exhibit a greater interest in accomplishing a learning task.

Not only affective but also cognitive domains are basic components of how attitudes are formed. This attitudinal link between the affective and cognitive domains has the potential to impact person behaviors. Educators say that two components construct person attitude: the affective component which measures the degree of emotional attraction or feeling towards an attitude object, and the cognitive component which accounts for the beliefs about the characteristics of the attitude object (Oppenheim, 1992). The degree of emotional attraction and the beliefs about the characteristics of the attitude object that people possess influence person life in all areas.

There is emerging clues to suggest that children who exhibit a more positive attitude towards physical activity in physical education are more likely to participate in physical activity out of school.

Both important and sensitive in terms of attitudes towards physical activity is moreover critical to participation in lifetime physical activity (McKenzie, 2003).

2. Method

Descriptive survey model was used in the research. The research data were collected from Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Faculty of Divinity and Faculty of Education students in 2018–2019 academic years. A total of 360 students were included in the study. Data were gathered with attitude scale towards physical activity developed by Savas and Celik Kayapinar (2013).

The scale is composed of 25 items and 5°. Taken the lowest score from the scale is 25, the highest score is 125. The coefficient of reliabilities were $\alpha = 0.940$ in the faculty of divinity and the faculty of education group ($\alpha = 0.872$). In the whole group, the coefficient of reliability was $\alpha = 0.927$. The reliability coefficient of the scale can be considered to be high. According to Pavet, Diener, Colwin and Sandvick (1991), the attitudes of scale towards physical activity have good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient reported of 0.85.

2.1. Features of sample group

When the gender distribution of the study group is examined, the ratio of women in both groups is higher than that of men. In the faculty of divinity, women were $n = 130$, 65.7% and men were $n = 68$, 34.3%. In the faculty of education, women were $n = 128$, 79% and men were $n = 34$, 21%. Gender distribution of the whole study group was $n = 258$, 71.7% (women) and $n = 102$, 28.3% (men). The average year of making sports is between 1 and 15 years and the average year of making sports is about 3 ($M = 2.85$) years. Forty (11.1%) of the students were licensed. An independent *t*-test was used to compare the mean scores. Percentage and frequency were used for descriptive statistics. Eta square was calculated after conducted independent samples *t*-test. Eta square is a set of statistics which indicates the relative magnitude of the differences between means. According to Cohen (1988), eta square represents the proportion of variance of the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variable. Values for eta square can range from 0 to 1. To interpret the strength of eta squared values, the following guidelines can be used (0.01 = small effect, 06 = moderate effect and 14 = large effect) (Palland, 2003, p. 175). The physical activity types and preferences are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The physical activity types and preferences

Physical activity types Control Group	First		Second		Third		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Inactive	-	-	-	-	-	-	138	19.16
Active	222	61.66	74	20.55	26	7.22		
Soccer	56	84.84	8	12.12	2	3.03	66	100
Volleyball	34	85.00	0	0	6	15.00	40	100
Recreational activities (walking, swimming, dance, rope, bocce)	42	63.63	20	30.30	4	6.06	66	100
Athleticism	30	71.42	8	19.04	4	9.52	42	100
Fitness	18	40.90	22	50.00	4	9.09	44	100
Basketball	12	54.54	8	36.36	2	9.09	22	100
Aerobic-Step-Pilates	18	90.00	0	0	2	10.00	20	100
Fighting Sports	4	40.00	4	40.00	2	20.00	10	100
Racket Sports (tennis, badminton, table tennis)	8	66.66	4	33.34	0	0	12	100

Table 1 shows that the most preferred physical activities are football and recreational activities, while fitness, athletics and volleyball rankings continue. While soccer is the first choice in the preferred ranking, recreational activities, volleyball and athletics are followed by soccer. Football is

the first choice in the sample is less than the number of men in the sample despite the fact that soccer channels in the media channels are easily accessible sports. When the physical activities are done, it can be stated that they are school sports and economic facilities and sports that do not require facilities.

In the research, the following problems were searched.

1. Is there a significant difference between the attitude scores towards exercise according to the groups?
2. Is there a difference between the departments according to gender in attitude scores towards exercise?
3. Is there a significant difference between the attitudes of actives and inactive?

3. Findings and conclusion

The findings obtained from the analyses for the identified problems were discussed together with the comments. The independent *t*-test result for the first problem was performed and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparing attitude scores towards physical activities by group

Groups	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t	p	n^2
Divinity Teacher Candidates	198	43.545	15.893	358	3.930	0.001	0.041
Elementary Teacher Candidates	162	38.259	9.295				

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the physical activities attitude scores for divinity teacher candidates and elementary teacher candidates. There was significant difference in scores for divinity teacher candidates ($\bar{x} = 43.545$, $SD = 15.893$) and elementary teacher candidates ($\bar{x} = 38.259$; $SD = 9.295$; $t(358) = 3.930$, $p > 0.05$). The magnitude of the differences in the means was small (eta square = 0.041).

Contrary to expectations, the students of divinity faculty have high attitudes towards physical activity. Although they do not take courses on exercise and physical activity other than high school education, it is very interesting that they show positive attitudes. It can be explained by their five regular prayer times. In addition, when taking ablution and prayer, regular exercise habits may be due to facilitating the worship process. On the other hand, although elementary education students take physical education and game teaching at higher education level, their attitude scores are low. However, the graduates of the elementary education teachers are obliged to give physical education and play lessons while exhibiting the teaching profession. The low attitude scores of the classroom education group may be due to the content of the physical education and sports course taken throughout the education life and the way the course is taught.

Table 3. A comparison of attitude scores between the faculties according to gender

Departments and Gender	N	\bar{x}	Sd	df	t	p	n^2
Faculty of divinity females	130	43.446	15.687	256	3.249	0.001	0.039
Elementary school candidates females	128	38.187	9.645				
Faculty of divinity males	68	43.735	16.396	102	2.158	0.030	0.043
Elementary school candidates males	34	38.529	7.962				

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare of attitude scores between the faculties according to gender for divinity teacher candidates and elementary teacher candidates. There was significant difference in scores for divinity teacher female candidates ($\bar{x} = 43.446$, $SD = 15.687$) and elementary teacher female candidates ($\bar{x} = 38.187$; $SD = 9.645$; $t(256) = 3.249$, $p > 0.05$). The

magnitude of the differences in the means was small (eta square = 0.039). There was significant difference in scores for divinity teacher male candidates (\bar{x} = 43.735, SD = 16.396) and elementary teacher male candidates (\bar{x} = 38.529; SD = 7.962; $t(102) = 2.158, p > 0.05$). The magnitude of the differences in the means was small (eta square = 0.043). This can be explained by the fact that the faculty of divinity, as described in the previous table, attaches importance to regular physical activity. The gender-based attitude scores in the group are equivalent. The reason for the equivalence of the scores may be indicative of the fact that both groups are affected at the same level by their gender-specific education programmes.

Table 4. Comparison of the attitude scores in group according to actives and inactive

Departments and active-inactive	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t	p	n2
Faculty of divinity' actives	136	38.735	12.421	196	6.205	0.001	0.164
Faculty of divinity' inactive	62	54.096	17.594				
Elementary school candidates' actives	96	36.791	8.856	160	2.461	0.015	0.036
Elementary school candidates' inactive	66	40.393	9.568				

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the attitude scores in group according to actives or inactive. There was significant difference in scores for inactive divinity teacher candidates (\bar{x} = 54.096; SD = 17.594; $t(196) = 6.205; p > 0.05$) and active divinity teacher candidates (\bar{x} = 38.735; SD = 12.421). The magnitude of the differences in the means was large effect (eta square = 0.164). There was significant difference in scores for inactive elementary teacher candidates (\bar{x} = 40.393; SD = 9.568; $t(160) = 2.461; p > 0.05$) and active elementary teacher candidates (\bar{x} = 36.791; SD = 8.856). The magnitude of the differences in the means was small (eta square = 0.036). The mean values of those who did not perform regular physical activity were significantly higher than those who did activity. Regular physical activity includes material and spiritual sacrifices. For example, creating an individual programme and complying with this programme, and the problem of access to the application space and the closed areas may be a compelling factor such as being paid. In addition, the presence of shower facilities in the application areas, as well as the cleanliness of the environment, the difficulties in preparing the training programme for the person and the low attitude scores of the participants can be among the reasons.

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