

The Relationship Between the Levels of Social Support That Middle and High School Students Receive during the Physical Activities and Their Happiness

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship between the middle and high school students' perceptions of social support they receive from their parents and peers during the physical activities and their happiness. Middle and high school students voluntarily participated in this research. 460 forms were obtained from the participants and accepted as data. The obtained data from middle and high school students were grouped, and the differences and relationships were analyzed. In the study, it was determined that the social support levels of middle school students for physical activities from their peers and parents were higher than that of high school students. Moreover, it was concluded that as the level of received social support by students from their peers and parents for physical activities increased, their happiness levels also increased.

Keywords: physical activity, social support, happiness, peer, parents

DOI: 10.29329/epasr.2022.461.6

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Introduction

Human relations are a set of subjects that originate from the will to live together and must be handled in a multi-disciplinary manner. The quality of the social relations, which developed thanks to human communication and interactions, affects individuals directly. Determining positive and negative social effects can contribute to developing appropriate human relations.

People who live with other individuals in society, by their nature, gain various benefits from the social relationships they develop. The stronger the positive social relationships that the individual develops, the more positive the psychological health of the individual will be (Doğan and Sapmaz, 2012). From this point of view, the significance of strengthening social relationships is revealed. Besides the tools such as culture and art, which intensify the social relationships, physical activities can also have important roles in developing positive relationships by bringing people together.

Concerning a set of daily routine physical activities, physical activities are also phenomena that develop individuals in terms of physiology, psychology, and sociology (Yıldırım and Bayrak, 2019). Furthermore, as well as increasing the quality of life, physical activities are one of the elements which become helpful in establishing and maintaining social relationships in a healthy way (Dinç et. al., 2018). In encouraging individuals to participate in physical activities, the support they receive from their peers and parents is also of great importance.

Social Support of Parents in Physical Activities

Social support is characterized as individuals' being in a social structure in which they get help from other individuals whom they consider important and valuable (Lepore, Evans and Schneider, 1991; Saygın and Arslan, 2009). On the other hand, the emotional and social support one gets from these connections is also covered by the social support term (Yıldırım, 1997).

The primary social structure provides social support for the individual in the family (Traş and Arslan 2013). The parents, from whom the child gets support in terms of acquiring basic needs, support the child also in terms of socializing. Following childhood, the parents also facilitate help in the socialization of the adolescents (Bugental and Goodnow, 1998). It is an anticipated result that social support will also help individuals in overcoming the obstacles they encounter. In addition to the social support which is provided by the parents in the early years of life, the social support which is provided by peers during adulthood will contribute to the physical and psychological well-being of the individual (Aksoy, et. al., 2018).

Social Support of Peers in Physical Activities

While maintaining social interactions with parents, individuals can also develop similar interactions with other people. Besides the family, the close connections, who are impressive over one's life and regarded as important, make the other social support sources. As well as spouses, relatives, and teachers, friends are also among the social support sources (Gündoğan and Sargın, 2018).

Individuals, who experience various social phases throughout life, can be expected to receive social support from different sources (Öztürk, 2015). Childhood and adolescence periods particularly are of significance in terms of getting social support from peers besides parents (Malkoç and Yalçın, 2015) The adolescent individual who is struggling to discover and admit himself/herself, contributes positively to his/her mental health thanks to the social support (Akın and Ceyhan, 2005).

Along with emotional development, peer relations fulfill important functions for social development (Yörükoğlu, 2012; Hong, Espelage, and Sterzing, 2017; Pehlevan and Bal, 2018). Physical activities, which can develop peer relationships, provide a convenient atmosphere for the psycho-social development of individuals. Getting involved in such activities enable the development and strengthening of interpersonal interactions by providing socializing opportunities (Ramazanoğlu et. al., 2005). Furthermore, sportive activities, which contribute to the socialization of individuals, will also satisfy the need for belonging to a group (Pehlevan and Bal, 2018). The individuals, who receive support for the satisfaction of this need and get involved in the activities, will feel its positive effects .

The Relation of Social Support and Happiness in Physical Activities

Physical activities and happiness levels are directly interrelated, and it is stated that happiness level increases with the intensity of physical activity (Richards et. al., 2015). These activities are defined as the activities which enable learning social skills such as coming together, cooperating, and having common values through communication (Küçükbiş and Eskiler, 2019). When they participate in physical activities, children and adolescents make new friends while they are having an enjoyable time. Besides contributing to physical development, such activities also support psychological well-being (Başar, 2018).

The positive relationships we develop with our families and friends, who have been supportive since childhood, will make us feel well (Yalçın, 2015). On the other hand, when social relations are inadequate or ruined, it is inevitable for the individual to experience negative feelings and have mental health disturbances. Adolescence, in which the social identity develops, is a transition phase in terms of getting social support from parents and peers (Kuzucu et. al., 2020; Avcı, 2010). Therefore, it is thought that the presence of someone from whom middle school and high

school students can receive social support in various ways will be an effective factors on the adolescents' happiness.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to examine the relationship between the social support that middle and high school students receive from their parents and peers during physical activities and their happiness levels. In this context, answers to the following questions were sought;

1. Is there a relationship between the levels of social support that students receive from their parents in physical activities and their happiness levels?

2. Is there a relationship between the levels of social support that students receive from their peers in physical activities and their happiness levels?

Method

Research Model

This study aimed to analyze the relationship between happiness level and perception of social support middle school and high school students receive from their parents and peers for physical activities. The study is based on a quantitative research pattern. A general survey model was utilized in the study. The general survey model is “*the survey model which studies the whole universe or a sample of it to reach to a conclusion about the universe which consists of several members*” (Karasar, 2012).

Participants

460 middle school and high school students participated voluntarily in the study. 217 (47,2%) of the participants are girls (female) and 243 (52,8%) of the participants are boys (male). All of the students are receiving their education in the Turkish provinces of Samsun, Rize, and Erzurum in the 2020-2021 academic year.

Table 1. Demographics of the Participants

		N	%
Gender	Female	217	47.2
	Male	243	52.8
Physical Activity Involvement	Yes	147	32.0
	No	313	68.0
Educational Status	Middle School	346	75.2
	High school	114	24.8
Total Number of Participants		460	100.0

In Table 1, the gender, grade, and physical activity involvement levels of the participants are analyzed. When the gender range of the participants is regarded, we can see that 217 (47,2%) of the participants are girls (female) and 243 (52,8%) of them are boys (male). While 32% of the participants are having their middle school education, 68% of them are in high school. In terms of physical activity involvement, 75,2% of the participants are active while 24,8% of them are passive.

Data Collection Tool

Face-to-face and online survey methods were used, and a list of questions (personal info form) and two different scales were applied to the participants.

Personal Information Form

The personal information form consisted of questions about the participants' age, gender, and education level.

Social Support Scale for Physical Activities

Farias Jr. et. al.'s "*Social Support Scale for Physical Activities (SSSPA)*" (2014), which was adapted into Turkish by Küçükibiş and Eskiler (2019), is utilized. SSSPA consists of 10 clauses. Scale also includes two sub-dimensions: parent social support and peer social support. The scale is in a quadruple grading pattern (0=Never – 3=Always) and does not include reverse clauses.

Happiness Scale

The "*Happiness Scale*", developed by Demirci and Ekşi (2018) to measure the happiness levels of the participants, consisting of 6 items and a single dimension, was used. There was no reverse item on the scale.

Data Collection

Legal permission and ethical compliance reports were obtained from official authorities to apply the questionnaires to the determined sample group. To collect the data accurately, help was received from physical education and sports teachers. Participants were informed about the research and their voluntary participation was requested. The students answered the questionnaires in 10±5 minutes.

Ethical Clearance

Sivas Cumhuriyet University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee approved this study (Approval no. 60263016-050.06.04-E.494574/ 04/12/2020). Informed consent forms were provided by all participants.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed via IBM SPSS 22.0. First of all, the data were checked for normal distribution, and multicollinearity and linearity controls were carried out (Altunışık et. al., 2012; Büyüköztürk et. al., 2016). Upon this evaluation, the data is proven to be linear. The values are checked between ± 2 and included in the data pool (George and Mallery, 2003). Furthermore, definitive statistics were used during the analysis, a t-test was used to define the variables, and regression analysis was utilized to analyze the relationships among variables.

Results

In this part of the study, findings and interpretations are included.

Table 2. Definitive Statistics about Variables of the Study

Variables	\bar{X}	Ss	Skewness	Kurtosis	A
Parental Social Sup.	1,21	,762	,130	-,818	,78
Peer Social Sup.	1,50	,833	-,139	-,863	,83
SSSPA	1,35	,682	-,043	-,698	,84
Happiness Scale	2,79	,882	-,752	,403	,81

In Table 2, the mean of peer social support sub-dimension (1,50) appears to be higher than the mean of parent social support (1,21). While Cronbach's alfa reliability coefficient of parent social support is 0.78, it is 0.83 for peer social support. Also, while the internal consistency reliability coefficient of the whole scale is 0.84, it is 0.81 for the happiness scale. According to these findings, it is safe to state that the scale is highly reliable, based on the validity and reliability analysis of the scale.

Table 3. Comparison of Participants' Physical Activity Social Support Perceptions and Happiness Levels by Gender

Variables	Gender	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	t	p	
SSSPA Sub Dimensions	Parental Social Support	Female	217	1,13	,754	-2,218	,068
		Male	243	1,29	,764		
	Peer Social Support	Female	217	1,46	,810	-1,900	,281
		Male	243	1,54	,854		
SSSPA Total	Female	217	2,83	,664	-1,080	,058	
	Male	243	2,77	,694			
Happiness Scale	Female	217	1,29	,917	,682	,496	
	Male	243	1,42	,853			

*p<0,05 SSSPA = Social Support Scale for Physical Activities, \bar{X} = Arithmetic Mean, S.D. =Standard Deviation

Upon the evaluation of Table 3, it was determined that, by gender, there is not any meaningful difference between parent social support (t=2,218) and peer social support (t=1,900), and between SSSPA total mean (1,080) and happiness level (t=0,682), in statistical terms (p>,05).

Table 4. Comparison of Participants' Physical Activity Social Support Sub-Dimensions and Happiness Levels by Grade

Variables	Grade	N	\bar{X}	S.S.	t	p	
SSSPA Sub-Dimensions	Parental Social	Middle School	147	7,03	3,51	3,750	,000
	Support	High School	313	5,63	3,84		
	Peer Social	Middle School	147	8,71	3,51	2,968	,003
		Support	High School	313	7,57		
SSSPA Total	Middle School	147	1,53	15,7	3,979	,000	
	High School	313	1,28	13,1			
Happiness Scale	Middle School	147	3,04	,743	4,081	,000	
	High School	313	2,68	,921			

*p<0,05 SSSPA = Social Support Scale for Physical Activities, \bar{X} = Arithmetic Mean, S.D. =Standard Deviation

When Table 4 is examined, it can be seen that, by the grade, there is a meaningful difference between participants' perception of parent support (t=3,750; p<,05) and peer support (t=2,968; p<,05). Besides, it can be also noted that, by grade, there is a meaningful difference between SSSPA average (t=3,979; p<,05) and happiness level (t=4,081; p<,05) in statistical terms.

Table 5. Results of Correlation Analysis for Physical Activity Involvement Level of Participants, Sub-Dimensions of Social Support Scale for Physical Activities, and Internal Consistency Values

Variables		1	2	3	4	5
1 Physical Activity Involvement	R	1				
	P					
2 Parental social Support	R	,194**	1			
	P	,000				
3 Peer Social Support	R	,181**	,460**	1		
	P	,000	,000			
4 SSSPA Total	R	,221**	,840**	,868**	1	
	P	,000	,000	,000		
5 Happiness Scale	R	,103*	,269**	,224**	,291**	1
	P	,027	,000	,000	,000	

*p<0,05; **p<0,01 n=460

*p<0,05 SSSPA = Social Support Scale for Physical Activities, \bar{X} = Arithmetic Mean, S.D. =Standard Deviation

When Table 4 is examined, it can be seen that, by the grade, there is a meaningful difference between participants' perception of parent support (t=3,750; p<,05) and peer support (t=2,968; p<,05). Besides, it can be also noted that, by grade, there is a meaningful difference between SSSPA average (t=3,979; p<,05) and happiness level (t=4,081; p<,05) in statistical terms.

Table 6. Regression Analysis Results for the Effect of Physical Activity Social Support Sub-Dimensions and Physical Activity Involvement on Happiness

Dependent Variable: Happiness							
Variables(Constant)	B	Std. Error	B	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
Parental Social Support	,045	,012	,195	3,849	,000	,780	1,283
Peer Social Support	,156	,053	,147	2,916	,004	,785	1,274
Physical Activity Involvement	,081	,093	,040	,869	,386	,953	1,050
F=15,410**, R2=,092, DzltR2=,086							

*p<0,05; **p<0,01 Method: Enter

*p<0,05 SSSPA = Social Support Scale for Physical Activities, \bar{X} = Arithmetic Mean, S.D. =Standard Deviation

In Table 6, linear regression analysis was utilized to determine the effect of parent and peer social support sub-dimensions on happiness. As a result of the analysis, it was discovered that physical activity social support sub-dimensions predict happiness variable around 9% (adj. R²=0,86). In other words, it was determined that the parent and peer social support variables have a statistically meaningful effect on the happiness level of the students ($p < 0,05$). Also, it was found that the highest degree of effect on happiness level belongs to parent social support ($\beta = 0,195$, $p < 0,05$) and it is followed by peer social support ($\beta = 0,147$, $p < 0,01$) and physical activity involvement level ($\beta = 0,040$, $p < 0,01$) variables.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This part of the study consists of discussion, results, and recommendations about the relationship between social support perception in physical activities and the happiness level of middle school and high school students.

In the study, it was observed that there was no significant difference in the levels of social support and happiness in physical activities according to the gender variable of the participants (Table 3). When the literature was examined, there were similar results with the results of this research (Kemer and Atik, 2005; Çeçen, 2008; Henriksen et al., 2016; Turgut and Çapan, 2017; Aydın et al., 2017; İlhan and Taşkın, 2019; Çankaya and Meydan, 2018; Kasapoğlu and Kış, 2016; Katja et. al., 2002; Mahon and Yacheski, 2005; Dost, 2006; Cenkseven and Akbaş, 2007), and there were studies showing differences with the results of this research (Jackson and Warren, 2000; Demaray and Malecki, 2002; Malecki and Demaray, 2006; Kapıkıran and Özgüngör, 2009; Sezer, 2011; Huang and Humphreys, 2012; Alfalah and Alganem, 2020; Bingol and Bingol, 2020).

It can be seen that the level of parent support the middle school students receive from their parents is higher than that of high school students (Table 4). Based on this finding, it can be stated that social support level decreases while the grade increases. Some studies in the literature came up with similar results (Garcia et. al., 1998; Duncan et. al., 2005; Raudsepp, 2006; Yaycı, 2016). Contrary to the results of our study, some studies claim that social support level increases by grade (Hüntük et. al., 2013). Furthermore, the relation between SSSPA total score and happiness level was analyzed, and statistically meaningful differences were determined. In the literature, some studies reached similar results (Gallagher and Vella-Brodrick, 2008; Siedlecki et. al., 2014; Kong et. al., 2020). Among middle school and high school students, the happiness level increases by the amount of perceived social support for physical activities.

The received social support level for physical activity involvement (parent and peer) is analyzed and a statistically meaningful positive relationship was determined (Table 5). When the

studies in the literature are scanned, similar to our findings, parent social support (Raudsepp, 2006; Dowda et. al., 2007; Beets et. al., 2010; Hsu et. al., 2011; İlhan and Taşkın, 2019) and peer social support (Voorhees et. al., 2005; Beets et. al., 2006; Salvy et. al., 2009) in physical activity involvement stand out as two significant influences. Many studies, which suggest that physical activity involvement inclination of adolescents increases by the amount of social support they receive, were discovered during literature review (Anderssen and Wold, 1992; Duncan et. al., 2005; Mendonça and Farias Júnior, 2015; Küçükbiş and Eskiler, 2019). On the other hand, studies which do not overlap with the results of our study, can also be encountered (Prochaska et. al., 2002; Higgins et. al., 2003; Frenn et. al., 2005; Ricardo et. al., 2013).

The relation between physical activity social support scale scores and sub-dimensions, and happiness levels for middle school and high school students are analyzed, and positive meaningful relation was determined (Table 5). Similar results were also found in the studies about social support and happiness, and wellness, which has conceptual relation to our subject (Schnittker, 2008; Edwards and Lopez, 2006; Horstmanshof et. al., 2008; Saygın and Arslan, 2009; Chu et. al., 2010; Lim et. al., 2015; Arslan, 2018; Boyacı, 2019) The positive outcome of the study can be supposed to have resulted from social support's evoking positive feelings and supporting the well-being of individuals. By this assumption, social support is suggested to be a significant need for individuals' well-being (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Diener and Oishi, 2005; Diener and Seligman, 2002).

Regression analysis results for the relation between social support in physical activity involvement and happiness levels are analyzed and it was determined that the perceived social support level of students predicts the happiness variable around 0,9% (Table 6). It was also found that the social support the participant middle school and high school students receive from their parents and peers is a significant predictor of happiness variables. In other words, it can be seen in the analysis that, happiness level decreases when parent and peer social support decreases, and it increases when parent and peer social support increases. Wu and Liu (2005) studied the relationship between subjective happiness feelings of university students and social support and concluded that social support is a predictor variable of subjective happiness.

Suggestions

According to the results of our study, the recommendations for schools and future researchers are as follows;

- Middle and high school administrations should organize physical activities, or increase the amount of the activities, if they already have any, for the well-being of their students.

- School administrations should also reach out to parents and inform them about the significance of social support.

- Utilizing the results of quantitative studies, the effect of physical activity and social support in increasing the happiness level of individuals, should be examined within qualitative studies and from different perspectives.

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