



## The Relationship between Attitudes towards Physical Activity and Self-Esteem of High School Students

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between attitudes towards physical activity and self-esteem of high school students. Three different scales were used on 626 adolescents in total who lived in Sivas, found by random sampling method. The first scale is “the Personal Information Scale” consisting of 6 items to determine the demographical characteristics of the participants; the second scale is “the Cognitive Behavioral Physical Activity Questionnaire (CBPA)”, which was developed by Schembre *et al.* (2015) and was adapted to Turkish by Eskiler *et al.* (2016) to determine the participants’ attitudes towards physical activity; and the last scale is “the Self-Esteem Scale” by Rosenberg (1965) and adapted to Turkish by Çuhadaroğlu (1985) to determine the levels of self-esteem of the participants. The study data was analyzed by SPSS 25 package software. The obtained data were represented as values of frequency (f), percentage (%), average ( $\bar{x}$ ), and standard deviation ( $\pm$ ). Pearson Correlation analysis was applied in order to determine the effect of physical activity attitudes on self-esteem. The age average of the participants was determined to be 16,28 ( $\pm 0,97$ ). The gender distribution was 312 females and 314 males, and the number of those who were participating in licensed sports was 336, and that of those who were not was 290. It was determined that there was a positive correlation between the participants’ attitude towards physical activity and their self-esteem. In conclusion, a positive correlation was found between the attitude towards physical activity and self-esteem. In the study, it was suggested that the tendencies towards physical activity should be protected.

**Keywords:** Adolescence, Self-esteem, Physical activity, Attitude, High school, students

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## 1. Introduction

Physical activity is an important form of activity that enables individuals to improve their biomechanical activity and remove their biochemical energy excess, and it has the ability to prevent mental and physical breakdowns caused by stress and over nutrition. Physical education and sports activities improve individuals' self-confidence, giving such significant support to psychological balance that individuals performing sports are cheerful, merciful, competitive and courteous (Erkan, 1991; Erkan, 1998). Therefore, individuals, who have devoted their lives to physical activity with a positive attitude, gain a dynamic, healthy, and productive personality. In line with these opinions and thoughts, the positive approach of all the developed countries towards physical activity facilitate their goal to raise a spiritually, physically, and mentally healthy society with a holistic educational approach (Yaka, 1991).

Attitude, one of the crucial components of human behavior, can be defined as learned tendencies which impel the individual to show certain behaviors in the face of certain individuals, objects, and situations. The fact that attitude is a determinant for the individual in participation to various activities and fields made it necessary to discuss this matter within the context of its relationship with physical activity (Koca and Aşçı, 2004). For example, according to Graham (1995) the key to improve the individual's tendencies towards physical activity is to understand his/her perception, thoughts, and attitudes

Self-esteem is defined as the individual respecting, interiorizing, dignifying, appreciating, approving him/herself, being pleased with him/herself, and finding him/herself positive and valuable (Bilgin, 2001; Kacan *et al.*, 2015). In literature, it has been reported that individuals with low self-esteem have limited social interactions, in which they experience many spiritual problems, and introverted personalities, and that they prefer loneliness (Inanc *et al.*, 2004; Altıok *et al.*, 2010). It has been found that sports and physical activities have a negatively correlated relationship between sports and physical activities and stress, anxiety and depression level; and a directly proportional relationship with self-esteem and self-perception (Karakaya *et al.*, 2006).

The increase in the number of studies on adolescents' self-esteem and their attitudes towards physical activity in the field of sports sciences may be linked with the fact that adolescents' attitude towards future physical activities has a positive effect on their self-esteem. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between adolescents' attitude towards physical activity and their self-esteem.

## 2. Material and Method

The study has descriptive quality in survey model. The first scale used in the study is "the Personal Information Form", which consists of 6 items to identify the demographical characteristics of the participants. The second scale is "the Cognitive Behavioral Physical Activity Questionnaire (CBPA)", which was developed by Schembre *et al.* (2015) and was adapted and validated into Turkish by Eskiler *et al.* (2016). It was used to identify the participants' attitudes towards physical activities. The CBPA Questionnaire consists of 15 statements which was prepared as 5-point likert format (1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Undecided, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree) and 3 subscales. The subscales are Result Expectation (1,2,9,13,14), Self-Organization (3,4,5,6,8), and Personal Obstructions (7,10,11,12,15). The scores acquired from the scale were reflected according to the average score values between 1 and 5. The last scale is "the Self-Esteem Scale" by Rosenberg (1965) and adapted to Turkish by Çuhadaroğlu (1985) which consists of 10 items in the 4-point likert scale format (: Very true, 2: True, 3: False, 4: Very False) to determine the levels of self-esteem of the participants. The scale is graded based on total score. The statements 3, 4, 8, 9, and 10 were inversely coded.

The study scales were administered in the in-person interviews with 626 adolescents in total selected by random sampling method, who were 14-18 years old and were studying in the high schools in the central district of Sivas province in 2018.

The data analysis was done by SPSS 25 statistics software. The data acquired were represented as values of frequency (f), percentage (%), average ( $\bar{x}$ ), and standard deviation ( $\pm$ ). Pearson Correlation test was applied in order to determine the effect of physical activity attitudes on self-esteem. The age average of the participants was determined to be 16,28 ( $\pm 0,97$ ). The gender distribution was 312 females and 314 males, and the number of those who were participating in licensed sports was 336, and that of those who were not was 290.

## 3. Results

Table-1. Grades of Participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentage(%)
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	172	27,5
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	178	28,4
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	246	39,3
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	30	4,8
Total	626	100

As seen in Table 1, the number of 11<sup>th</sup> graders is higher than that of others.

Table-2. Income of Participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentage(%)
TL 0-1601	129	20,6
TL 1602-3200	309	49,4
TL 3201 and over	180	28,8
Total	618	98,7

As seen in Table 2, it was revealed that the income average of TL 1602-3200 is higher than other averages.

**Table-3. Physical Activity Status of Participants**

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	336	53,7
No	290	46,3
Total	626	100

As seen in Table 3, the number of licensed students who perform sports activities is higher than that of those who do not perform any sports activities.

**Table-4. Sports Branch Status of Participants**

	Frequency	Percent
Sedanter	290	46,3
Individual sport	160	25,6
Team sport	176	28,1
Total	626	100

As seen in Table 4, the percentage of the student who are not licensed in any branch of sports is higher than that of those who perform individual or team sports.

**Table-5. The Relationship Status between the Participants' Attitude towards Physical Activity and Their Self-Esteem**

		Result Expectation	Self-Organization	Personal Obstructions	Self-Esteem
Result Expectation	Pearson Correlation	1	,535**	,194**	-,200**
	P		,000	,000	,000
	N	626	626	626	626
Self-Organization	Pearson Correlation	,535**	1	,150**	-,043
	P	,000		,000	,285
	N	626	626	626	626
Personal Obstructions	Pearson Correlation	,194**	,150**	1	,132**
	P	,000	,000		,001
	N	626	626	626	626
Self-Esteem	Pearson Correlation	-,200**	-,043	,132**	1
	P	,000	,285	,001	
	N	626	626	626	626

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As seen in Table 5, it was determined that there was a positive correlation between the participants' attitude towards physical activity and their self-esteem.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Most of the individuals who participated in the study are licensed in a branch of sports (53,7%). The percentage of the individuals who are not licensed in any branch of sport is 46,3%. Upon reviewing the grades of the participants, we can state that the percentage of 11<sup>th</sup> graders (39,3%) are higher than that of others. We can also say that nearly half of the participants have an income over minimum wage. When we look at the sports branch status of the participants, the percentage of those who are not licensed in any branch is higher than that of those who perform individual or team sports. It was determined that there was a positive correlation between the participants' attitude towards physical activity and their self-esteem. Therefore, motivating the self-esteem of adolescent individuals can play an efficient role in positively affecting their attitudes towards physical activity.

The studies have shown that the frequency of participating in physical activities decreases in adolescence, and that individuals tend towards occupations with low activity, thus, it has been suggested that the school-age individuals perform physical activity for 60 minutes daily Akman *et al.* (2012); Stang and Bayerl (2003); GaripaIaoIlu *et al.* (2008); Vadiveloo *et al.* (2009); Wrotniak *et al.* (2007). The study by Ryan (2009) on 994 high school students between the ages of 11-16 in Florida revealed that physical activity status decreases as the students grow. Modern life style and the change in the socio-cultural structure has minimized the need for physical activity for adolescents, thus, giving birth to sedentary life style. As commonly known, sedentary life style is defined as a risk factor in the development of coronary artery diseases, hypertension, obesity, type-II diabetes, some forms of cancer, and some chronic diseases. A life style that based on physical inactivity in daily life plays an important part in disability and mortality (American College of Sports Medicine, 1998). With regards to this result, we can say that adolescent individuals may participate more in physical activities when we improve their self-esteem.

It was found that the attitude of students, who do sports in their free time or are players in a sports club, towards physical education lesson was higher. This may be due to the desires of students to attend the physical education lesson related with their interest in sports Okut (2017); Imamoglu (2011); Zengin (2013). The fact that most of the adolescent individuals in our study do sports (%53,7) may suggest that these individuals have tendencies towards physical activity.

Sports have positive effects on the development of the features of self-esteem (McDuff and Baron, 2005). The study by Aksaray (2003) on the effect of skills education and activities towards developing self-esteem included two different experiment groups: the placebo group and the control group. The findings showed that general, social, family, school and total self-esteem scores of students, who had attended to skills and activity programs, increased. The literature survey results show that those who perform sports activities have higher self-esteem than those who do not Polat (2014); Aksaray (2003); Utku *et al.* (2006).

The study of Polat (2014) revealed that there was a significant difference between the group who do not exercise and the group who do exercise for 25 months and over, when the self-esteem scale is considered. The self-esteem of the group who do regular exercise is higher than that of the group who do not. There is an inverse proportion between the average value in the self-esteem scale and self-esteem, which means that self-esteem is considered high when the average is low. This result is of supportive quality for our study.

In addition to that regular exercise makes the individual physically fit, it also provides a spiritual and psychological relaxation. It can be concluded that the individuals who attend exercise program will get more body satisfaction, thus, will be able to cope with psychological problems, such as anxiety, depression etc., and that their self-esteem will improve. In the situation of depression and anxiety, an activity like exercising, which will occupy the mind and will draw personal attention to somewhere else, will keep the disturbing thoughts out of the mind.

It was revealed that high self-esteem had a significant effect on the participants' attitude towards physical activity. We can state that most of the studies in Turkey are on "the attitudes towards physical education lesson in terms of gender and socio-cultural variables", and that there are few studies on "the attitude towards physical activity and sports". Adolescents do not have sufficient information on physical activity. Further studies can examine school-and environment-related factors that increase self-esteem, the levels of attitude towards physical activity and whether these factors are determinant in the individuals' self-esteem and their attitudes towards sports.

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