



Examination of Goal Commitment and Subjective Happiness Levels of the Students Studying at the Faculty of Sport Sciences According to Gender, Active Sport Participation and Sports Type Variables

Erkan Bingol¹

Duygu Yarali Bingol²

¹Vocational School Koycegiz, Mugla Sitki Kocman University, Mugla, Turkey.

Email: bingolerkan@gmail.com Tel: +902522113171

²Department of Physical Education and Sports, Mugla Sitki Kocman University, Mugla, Turkey.

Email: duyguyarali@gmail.com Tel: +902522113171



(Corresponding Author)

Abstract

This study was carried out to examine the goal commitment and subjective happiness levels of students studying in the faculty of sport sciences according to some variables. The research group consisted of 346 students who voluntarily participated from the faculty of sport sciences of a state university in Turkey. "Goal Commitment Scale" was used to determine the level of goal commitment of the participants, and the "Subjective Happiness Scale" was used to determine the levels of subjective happiness. Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of demographic variables, Pearson correlation was used to determine the direction and strength of the variables, independent sample t-test was used for comparisons of the groups. The results of the study showed that subjective happiness levels of students differed according to gender and goal commitment levels differ depending on the active sport participation. In addition, significant and positive relationships were observed between the goal commitment and subjective happiness levels of the students and between the academic grade averages and the goal commitment levels. These results indicate that the goal commitment levels of students will increase as a result of encouraging active sports, and thus their academic success and subjective happiness may increase.

Keywords: Goal commitment, Subjective happiness, Sport, Student, Academic success, Sport type.

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Contribution of this paper to the literature

This study contributes the literature by examining the target loyalties and subjective happiness levels of students studying in the faculty of sports sciences according to some variables.

1. Introduction

In recent years, researchers have started to show more interest in studies on goal commitment and subjective happiness. The basis for this is that both concepts are effective in individuals' behaviors. It is seen that the concept of goal commitment was developed as a goal theory in behavioral literature. Hollenbeck, Klein, O'Leary, and Wright (1989) emphasized that goal commitment plays a very important role in individuals' behaviors in their research for the goal setting. However, it has been suggested that not giving due importance to the goal commitment may lead to unexpected negative results in goal determination (Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987). When the studies on the subject are examined, it is seen that the goal-setting theory is the most useful and valid theory scientifically and the need for goal adherence in the goal-setting behavior is advocated (Locke & Latham, 2009). Goal commitment was defined as an effort to achieve a specific goal (Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981). Hollenbeck and Klein (1987) defined this concept as the intention of not losing the effort to reach the goal over time and the unwillingness to abandon the goal and the insistence on maintaining this goal over time. From an individual perspective, it is suggested that each individual may have different levels of commitment to the same goal and show different attitudes towards the goal (Wright, O'Leary-Kelly, Cortina, Klein, & Hollenbeck, 1994). Moreover, an individual cannot be expected to be equally attached to his/her goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). Goal commitment measurements also differ due to the level of goal commitment. In summary, it has been revealed that commitment-oriented measurements of commitment are more valid, thus producing more variability than cognitive-oriented measurements (Leifer & McGannon, 1986).

In terms of students, goals are described as different and multivariate profiles determined for the learning task (Pieschl, Stahl, & Bromme, 2013). In the education process, learning objectives are determined by focusing on development and progress. Students make an effort to learn and develop their abilities, regardless of whether they can be evaluated according to certain standards or compared their success to others (Senel & Yildiz, 2016). In this process, the efforts of the students for their goals show the level of their goal commitments.

The phenomenon of happiness, which has been studied by researchers for many years, has become a concept that needs much more advanced research as a result of the negative effects caused by various conditions in the flow of life (Baysal & Aka, 2013). The concept of happiness matures with the individual's emotional state, interests, desires, and needs, and these needs differ from individual to individual (Kose, Uzun, Ozlu, Celik, & Erbas, 2019). As a matter of fact, the concept of happiness, which may differ from individual to individual, can be used in place of concepts such as "efficient, happiness, well-being, satisfaction with the quality of life and subjective well-being" (Bulbul & Giray, 2011; Gumus & Isik, 2018; Isik, Gumus, Okudan, & Yilmaz, 2014). Happiness is defined as the fact that the individual experiences positive emotions more frequently, negative emotions live less, and as generally satisfied with his/her life (Argyle, Martin, & Crossland, 1989). In addition, happiness is a concept closely related to how the individual perceives himself/herself (Eryilmaz, 2010).

Researches in the literature show that people's happiness levels are related to their orientation towards goal and their goal commitments. There is evidence that individuals' progress in achieving their goals has an intermediary effect on subjective well-being interaction of adherence to the target (Brunstein, 1993). It is often stated that striving towards individual goals within the framework of personal goal structures gives structure and meaning to that individual's life (Klinger, 1977; Little, 1989). Empirical evidence has indicated that individuals who are subjectively pursuing personal goals have higher subjective well-being than individuals without a sense of goal orientation (Emmons, 1986; Freund & Baltes, 2002).

It is clear that goal commitment and subjective happiness, which are very effective on individuals' behaviors, should be investigated much more, especially on students. In this context, this study focused on students studying in a faculty of sport sciences and aimed to examine the goal commitment and subjective happiness levels of students according to some variables. For this purpose, answers to the following research questions were sought:

RQ1. Is there a significant difference in the goal commitment and subjective happiness levels of the students in terms of gender variable?

RQ2. Is there a significant difference in the goal commitment and subjective happiness levels of the students in terms of active sport participation variable?

RQ3. Is there a significant difference in the goal commitment and subjective happiness levels of the students in terms of sport type variable?

RQ4. Is there a significant relationship between students' goal commitment, subjective happiness, and academic grade point averages?

2. Method

2.1. Sample Size

The study population of the research consisted of students studying in the Faculty of Sport Sciences at Mugla Sitki Kocman University, in Turkey. The sample consisted of 346 students, 127 women and 219 men, who participated in the study voluntarily by the random method. The average age of the students was 21.22 and the academic grade point average was 2.78.

2.2. Measurement Instruments

To determine the level of the goal commitment of the participants the "Goal Commitment Scale", which was first developed as 9 items by Hollenbeck et al. (1989) and then revised with 5 items and one-dimension by Klein, Wesson, Hollenbeck, Wright, and DeShon (2001) was used. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.74. Then, the Turkish adaptation of the scale was made by Senel and Yildiz (2016). Scale statements were measured with a 5-point Likert rating (1= I strongly disagree, 5= I strongly agree).

To determine the subjective happiness levels of the participants, the “Subjective Scale of Happiness” developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) and later adapted in Turkish by Akin and Seller (2011) was used. The scale consists of 4 items and one-dimension. In the study made by Akin and Seller (2011) the reliability coefficient of the scale was determined as 0.62. Scale statements were measured with a 7-point Likert rating (1= Not a very happy person, 7= A very happy person).

2.3. Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed in SPSS 22 program. Demographic properties were determined by descriptive statistics. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of the scales were found to be quite reliable (0.668 for goal commitment, 0.636 for subjective happiness). In addition, it was observed that the data analyzed by Skewness and Kurtosis were between +1.5 and -1.5 and showed normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Therefore, Independent Sample T-Test was used to compare groups, and the Pearson correlation test was used to determine the relationships between variables.

3. Findings/Results

3.1. Demographic Properties

Table-1. Demographic properties of the participants.

Variables	Categories	f	%
Gender	Female	127	36.7
	Male	219	63.3
Sport type	Individual sports	179	51.7
	Team sports	167	48.3
Active sport participation	Yes	170	49.1
	No	176	50.9

Table 1 shows that most of the participants are male (63.3%), 51.7% of them are doing individual sports and 50.9% of them are actively continuing the sport.

3.2. Independent Sample T-Test

Table-2. Comparison of participants’ goal commitment and subjective happiness levels according to gender, active sport participation and sport type variables.

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Sd	t	df	p
Goal Commitment Total Score	Female	127	22.18	2.348	-.141	344	.887
	Male	219	22.21	2.469			
Subjective Happiness Total Score	Female	127	19.77	4.212	2.943	344	.003**
	Male	219	18.36	4.340			
	Active Sport Participation	N	Mean	Sd	t	df	p
Goal Commitment Total Score	Yes	170	22.47	2.313	2.057	344	.040*
	No	176	21.94	2.501			
Subjective Happiness Total Score	Yes	170	18.92	4.110	.177	344	.859
	No	176	18.84	4.565			
	Sport Type	N	Mean	Sd	t	df	p
Goal Commitment Total Score	Individual sports	179	22.24	2.376	.322	344	.747
	Team sports	167	22.16	2.477			
Subjective Happiness Total Score	Individual sports	179	18.73	4.516	-689	344	.491
	Team sports	167	19.05	4.152			

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

Table 2 indicates the independent sample t-test results between variables. Accordingly, there is a significant difference in subjective happiness levels in terms of gender (p<0.01). The subjective happiness levels of female participants are higher than male participants. There is a significant difference in goal commitment levels in terms of active sport participation variable (p<0.05). It is observed that the goal commitment levels of individuals who do active sports are higher than those who do not do sports. On the other hand, there is no significant difference in goal commitment and subjective happiness levels in terms of sport type variable (p>0.05).

3.3. Correlation Analysis

Table-3. Correlation results.

Variables		Academic grade point average	Goal Commitment
Academic grade point average	r	1	
	p		
	N		
Goal commitment	r	.116*	1
	p	.031	
	N	346	
Subjective happiness	r	.098	.190**
	p	.070	.000
	N	346	346

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

Table 3 shows that there is a significant and positive relationship at the level of 0.05 between goal commitment and academic grade point average, and a significant and positive relationship at the level of 0.01 between subjective happiness and goal commitment.

4. Conclusion

This study was carried out to examine the goal commitment and subjective happiness levels of students studying in the faculty of sport sciences according to gender, active sport participation, sport type variables. In addition, relationships between some variables were also examined.

According to the results of our study, a significant difference was found in subjective happiness levels in terms of gender variable, and it was seen that subjective happiness levels of female participants were higher than male participants. Similar to these results, Sezer (2011) and Wood, Rhodes, and Whelan (1989) found that the subjective well-being of women is higher than that of men. The results of both studies support our research. In a different study by Huang and Humphreys (2012) in sport activity participation and subjective happiness, a significant difference was observed in favor of men in terms of gender variable. However, in some studies, subjective happiness was not differentiated according to gender (Certel, Bahadir, Saracaloglu, & Varol, 2015; Goksel, Caz, Yazici, & Zorba, 2018; Saygin & Arslan, 2009; Yaliz, 2014). When the goal commitment levels were examined, it was seen that there was no significant difference in our research in terms of gender variable. There are studies in the literature with different results. O'Connor (2012) in his study, found the goal commitment levels of women higher than men, while Jiang (2016) in his study on Chinese university students, found the goal commitment levels of men higher than women. Similar to our study, Onturk, Bingol, Goksel, and Caglayan (2018) observed that target commitment did not differ in terms of gender variable in their studies.

In terms of the active sport participation variable, it was found in our study that there was a significant difference in the goal commitment levels of the participants, and the scores of the individuals engaged in active sports were higher. Hence, it can be said that the goal commitment of individuals who actively continue to sport increases compared to those who do not do sports. Altay, Baştuğ, and Arıkan (2018) expressed that the goal commitment of individuals engaged in cycling sports increases as the age of sports increases. Cekceoglu and Esen (2019) observed that they did not differentiate in terms of active sports variable. There was no statistically significant difference in subjective happiness levels in terms of participation in active sports. Considering the subjective happiness levels according to the active sports variable, it is remarkable that the individuals who continue active sports have high scores and do not show statistically significant differences. It is clear that sports have a positive effect on subjective happiness levels of individuals (Huang & Humphreys, 2012; Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2007; Matsumoto, Sato, Asada, & Chiashi, 2018). Similarly, in the World Health Organization (2002) and in the studies of McAuley et al. (2000) it was emphasized that sports positively affect the subjective happiness levels of individuals in terms of psychology. In this context, Ruseski, Humphreys, Hallman, Wicker, and Breuer (2014) found that participation in sports positively affected subjective well-being and suggested that individuals participate in sports activities to increase their level of happiness. However, it was highlighted that individuals with a high sense of freedom in participating in leisure time activities had higher levels of intrinsic motivation, competence, and a sense of happiness (Janke, Carpenter, Payne, & Stockard, 2010).

In terms of the sport type variable, our research results revealed that the goal commitment and subjective happiness variables did not differ according to the groups. It was observed that there was no significant difference in the goal commitment and subjective happiness levels of the participants according to the individual sports and team sports variables. Studies in the literature on these issues are very limited. Zhou, Heim, and O'Brien (2015) in their study, observed that the level of happiness of team athletes is higher than that of individual athletes.

Finally, relationships between some variables were investigated and a significant and positive relationship was found between goal commitment and subjective happiness. Accordingly, as the level of goal commitment of students increases, their subjective happiness level increases. There are studies in the literature that support the results of our research. Brunstein (1993) in his study, found the mediating effect of goal adherence and goal attainability on subjective well-being interaction in the progress achieved in reaching the goal. Similarly, it was emphasized that there is a positive relationship between commitment to personal goals and subjective well-being (Emmons, 1986). In addition, there was a significant and positive relationship between academic grade averages and target commitment levels. As the goal commitment levels of students increase, their academic success increases. Ender Senel, Yildiz, and Can (2020) in their study, found that the target attachment increased academic success, and these findings support the results of our research. On the other hand, it is seen in the literature that studies dealing with academic success and goal commitment are limited.

To summarize, according to our research results, it can be emphasized that active participation of students in sports will increase their level of goal commitment, and thus their academic success and subjective happiness can be positively affected.

5. Recommendation

As the researches on goal commitment and subjective happiness are limited, the following recommendations can be given:

- New studies can be conducted on goal commitment and subjective happiness especially by considering the type of sport and academic success variables.
- In order to understand the issues better, the concepts of goal commitment and subjective happiness can be examined in depth according to different parameters.
- Both parents and educators should direct students to sports to increase their academic success and happiness.
- For higher academic performance, educators should convey the importance of sports to students well. Therefore, educators should develop themselves in the field of sports and have knowledge.

6. Limitations

Findings revealed by the research are limited with the measurement power of the scales used. In addition, since the research sample consists of only one faculty, research results cannot be generalized. More work is needed to make the issue clearer.

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