

# The Examination of the Attitudes of Secondary School Students Towards Physical Education Course

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## ABSTRACT

*The aim of this study is to examine the attitudes of primary education students towards physical education courses according to certain variables. 640 students from elementary schools in the city center and several counties of Sakarya participated in the study. In the designating of the students' attitudes towards the physical education courses, the Physical Education Courses Attitude scale, which was developed by Güllü & Güçlü (2009), was used. In the statistical analysis of the acquired data as a result of the study, frequency, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Mann-Whitney U, and Kruskal-Wallis H analysis were conducted in SPSS 15.0 for Windows software. As a result of the study, it is concluded that a large part of the students (63.9%) have a habit of doing sports regularly and the number of students who practice sports in a sports club is considerably high (43.8%). When the attitudes of the students towards the physical education courses are examined, it is discovered that the attitudes of students towards the physical education courses are generally high. It is also concluded that the attitudes of students towards the physical education courses do not demonstrate a statistically significant difference in terms of gender and age groups ( $P>0.05$ ). On the contrary, it is determined that the students' involvement in practicing sports with a license in a sports club and attending to tournaments affected their attitude towards the physical education courses positively and this acquired result is statistically meaningful.*

**Keywords:** Physical Education, secondary school, student, attitude, gender, age.

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a major role in the process of acculturation of societies (Demirel & Kaya, 2007). Accordingly, education contributes to teaching cultural values to individuals. Education, socially, is a fact that supports the cultural development of countries (Hoşgörür & Taştan, 2007). The main goal of education is to reveal the talents and hidden potentials of individuals and support the development of the mentioned features to the peak. The physical, mental, social and emotional raising of students as a whole is one of the basic principles of modern education system. Within this scope, the fact that the maintained education activities have a modern understanding supports students' development. Within the modern education system, the course which provides the teaching of primary movement skills and ensures the learning of students through movements is physical education. Based on these features, physical education courses have become an inseparable part of the modern education system (Kangalgil et al., 2006).

Physical education, conceptually, is defined as "an effective educational activity that is directly related to human health, character development and increasing morale efficiency, and the upbringing of a

human being who is strong in a national sense with high collective spirits and behaviors (Aras, 2013). According to another definition, physical education is defined as “a field of science that provides the spiritual and physical education of individuals without harming their organism integrity and aims to raise individuals in a manner that they are beneficial to their environment and society (Açak, 2006).

It is known that participating in sports and physical activities has positive effects on public health (Keskin, 2014; Güner, 2015). Physical education course has several positive effects on students' various development areas. Primarily, it is a fact that physically active students have higher levels of academic motivation (Aras, 2013). Besides, physical education is an effective way of providing and maintaining a physical coherence (Heper, 2012). It is known that physical education courses and physical activity programs are beneficial in order to maintain and improve health in school environments (Stratton & Mullan, 2005). On the other hand, it is pointed out that being involved in physical education and sports is highly beneficial in supporting social, physical, mental and motor developments (Açak, 2006; İmamoğlu, 2011; Şahin et al., 2012; Açak, 2006; Küçük & Koç 2004). In children and youth, it is stated that sports play a major role in reducing aggressive behavior to a minimum (Vardar, 2015). It is also known that participating in sports is an element that directly increases assertiveness level (Eraslan et al., 2015). On the contrary, especially in our country, several obstacles keep children and youth from participating in sports. The primary ones of the mentioned obstacles are the sufficiency in facilities and equipment (Hergüner et al, 2004).

Attitudes are elements which affect human life in various extents. In the literature, several definitions regarding the term, attitude, which affects human life on a significant level, were made. Alport defined attitude as “a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive and dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with to which it is related”. On the other hand, Katz defined attitude as “an individual's tendency of evaluating a symbol, an object or an event in the environment positively or negatively (İnceoğlu, 2010). On the attitudes of people, especially their experiences in early life, previously obtained prejudice, dogma, beliefs and values, place of individuals in a group or society, “sense of self” of individuals and an individual's education are significant determiners (Özyalvaç, 2010).

The attitudes of students towards courses affect their academic success throughout their education life. Attitudes of students towards physical education courses, as well as other courses, affect their motivation and interest towards the physical education courses. Findings of studies in the literature also support that opinion (Hünük, 2006); Sproule et al., 2007). It is known that physical education courses not only contribute to physical, mental and spiritual health development, but also to forming of national integrity and a healthy society (Hergüner, 1992). In this regard, major responsibilities fall onto the shoulders of families and education facilities in order to motivate children to sports and physical education activities in early ages. If this is provided, it can be expected that the students demonstrate a positive attitude towards physical education courses. However, initially, it is important to determine the factors which affect students' attitudes towards the courses. Within this scope, in this study, it was aimed to examine the attitudes of secondary education students towards physical education courses according to gender, age, doing sports regularly and participating in tournaments variables. The study aims to seek answers to the following questions;

1. Do the attitudes of the participants toward physical education class display statistically significant difference according to the gender variable?
2. Do the attitudes of the participants toward physical education class display statistically significant difference according to the age groups?
3. Do the attitudes of the participants toward physical education class display statistically significant difference according to the variable of doing sports?
4. Do the attitudes of the participants toward physical education class display statistically significant difference according to their status of attending sports competitions?

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

In the study, the survey model, which is a frequently used model of the descriptive research model, is used. As the data gathering tool for the study, a likert type scale, which is commonly utilized in the

education field, is employed (Karadağ, 2010). In the detection of the students' attitudes towards the physical education courses, the Physical Education Courses Attitude scale, a 5-point likert type scale developed by Güllü & Güçlü (2009), is used.

The population of the study comprises of secondary school students from the city center and several counties of Sakarya. The sample group of the study comprises of 640 secondary school students who receive education in different secondary schools from the city center and several counties of Sakarya. In the determination of the sampling of the project, the simple unbiased sampling model was utilized.

#### Data Collection Tools

As the data gathering tool for the study, surveys were used. The used survey comprises of two sections and in the first section of the survey includes questions to determine the demographic characteristics of the students. In the second section of the survey, the "Physical Education Courses Attitude Scale", which was developed by Güllü & Güçlü (2009), was employed in order to determine the students' attitudes towards the physical education courses. The used survey includes a total of 35 questions as 11 negative and 24 positive questions. The scale has one dimension and the variance value that a factor expresses is 36,19% and the eigenvalue was determined to be 12,67. After conducting the reliability tests of the survey, it was determined that the Cronbach Alpha value is 0,94 and the reliability coefficient is 0,80. The scale is a 5-point likert type and the rating form consists of "Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Indecisive (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1)". Out of the 35 matters in the scale, 11 of them are negative (matter 3, 17, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 34, 35) and 24 of them are positive. While the lowest point to acquire from the scale is 35, the highest possible point is 175 (Güllü & Güçlü, 2009). High scores received from the scale show that the participants' attitudes were positive toward physical education class, while low scores show that their attitudes are negative toward physical education class. The questionnaire which was used as a data collection tool was filled through face-to-face technique. Questionnaires which were found to be incomplete or filled incorrectly were not included in the study.

#### Statistical Analysis

In the analysis of the acquired data, SPSS 15.0 for Windows package software was used. In the determination of the percentage distribution of the demographic data of the students, frequency analysis was conducted. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to determine whether the points acquired from the attitude scale have a normal distribution and it was observed that the data do not demonstrate a normal distribution. Thus, non-parametric tests from basic statistics were used. Within this scope, Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to examine the effects of gender, age group, state of practicing sports and participating in sports tournaments on the attitude towards physical education courses.

#### Findings

The percentage distributions of the students in terms of gender, age group, regular sports activities and participating in sports competitions are given at Table 1.

**Table 1. The Percentage Distributions of the Participants in Terms of Gender, Age, State of Doing Physical Exercises and Participating in Sports Competitions**

Gender	F	%
Male	322	50,9
Female	311	49,1
Total	633	100,0
Age groups		
11-13 years	304	47,5
14-15 years	336	52,5
Total	640	100,0
State of Doing Physical Exercises Regularly		
I do physical exercises regularly	405	63,9
I do not do physical exercises regularly	229	36,1
Total	634	100,0
Participating in Sports Competitions		

I participate sport competitions	278	43,8
I do not participate sport competitions	356	56,2
Total	634	100,0

50,9% of the participants are male and 49,1% of them are female. It is seen that 47,5% of the students are in the 11-13 age groups and 52,5% of the are in the 14-15 age group. It is observed that 63,9% of the students do physical exercises regularly while 36,1% of them do not do exercise. Furthermore, it is determined that 43,8% of the students participate in sports competitions while 56,2% them do not take part in competitions.

At Table 2, the students' average points regarding physical education courses are given.

**Table 2. The Students' Average Points Regarding Physical Education Courses**

N	The Lowest	The Highest	X	Ss
644	51	175	147,37	18,282

It is identified that the students' average points regarding physical education courses are  $147,37 \pm 18,282$ . As the fact that the lowest possible point is 51 and the highest possible point is 175 is taken into consideration, it is determined that students' attitude points towards physical education courses are high.

The findings regarding comparison of the students' attitude levels towards physical education courses in terms of gender, age, states of doing physical exercises and participating into sports competitions are given at Table 3.

**Table 3. Comparison of The Participants' Attitude Levels Towards Physical Education Courses In Terms of Gender, Age, States of Doing Physical Exercises And Participating Into Sports**

Gender	N	X	Ss	Z	P
Male	322	148,44	16,241	-,381	,703
Female	311	146,55	19,879		
Age					
11-13 years	304	148,16	17,469	-,667	,505
14-15 years	336	146,79	18,893		
State of Doing Physical Exercises Regularly					
I Do Physical Exercises Regularly	405	151,32	16,352	-7,229	,001
I Do Not Do Physical Exercises Regularly	229	140,82	19,364		
State of Participating into Sports Competitions					
I Participate	278	149,69	16,357	-2,272	,023
I Do Not Participate	356	145,81	19,481		

As the Table is examined, it is not identified any statistically significant difference between the participants' attitude levels towards physical education courses with regard to their gender ( $p > 0,05$ ). It is identified that the attitude levels of the participants in 11-13 age groups are higher than the attitude levels of the participants of 14-15 age group. However, it is not found statistically significant difference between the participants' attitude levels in terms of age groups ( $p > 0,05$ ). It is seen that the attitude levels of the participants who do physical exercises regularly towards physical education courses are higher than the attitude levels of the participants who do not do physical exercises. That differentiation between the

participants' attitude levels with regard to their state of doing physical exercises regularly is statistically significant ( $p < 0,05$ ). Besides, it is found out that the attitude levels of the participants who participate in sports competitions towards physical education courses are higher than the attitude levels of the participants who do not take part in competitions. It is identified statistically significant difference between the attitude levels of the participants regarding their state of participating in sports competitions ( $p < 0,05$ ).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is determined that the general attitude levels of the students participated in the study are high. It might be thought the facts that students like physical education course and the courses are productive for them are influential factors in such a result. In a similar study by Aybek et al (2012), the students' attitudes towards physical education courses have been found to be high. In another study conducted by Çelik and Pular (2011), students' attitudes for physical education courses have been found to be at high levels. When the research findings of similar studies conducted in our country are evaluated, our study shows parallels with the literature.

It is found that attitude levels of secondary school students towards physical education classes do not differentiate significantly based on gender variable. When the findings of similar studies in the literature are examined, it is seen that results of several studies support the findings of our study (Gürbüz & Özkan, 2012; Başer, 2009; Taşmektepligil et al, 2006). On the contrary, some other research findings in the literature suggest that gender effects general attitude levels towards physical education class significantly (Ekici et al 2011; Aybek et al, 2012; Koca et al, 2005; Willams & Bedward, 2001; Flores et al, 2008; Zeng et al, 2011). In this scope, it may be said that research findings in the literature regarding attitude levels towards physical education courses show contradictory results for gender variable. In the literature, different findings regarding general attitude levels towards physical education courses stemming from gender specifications are found to be based on psychological characteristics of different genders, and different attitudes of male and female students towards physical education teachers (Aybek et al 2012; Alparslan, 2008)

It is found that the attitude levels of students participated in this study towards physical education do not differ significantly based on age groups. When we evaluate the research findings in the literature, it is found that some research findings show parallelism with our study while findings of some studies do not support our research findings. In a study conducted by Doğan (2011), it is found that attitude levels of students towards physical education do not differ significantly based on age groups. Furthermore, in a study conducted on primary school students which shows parallelism with our study, it is found that attitudes towards physical education do not differ substantially based on age groups (Gürbüz, 2011). In the study of Gürbüz & Özkan (2012), it is stated that new researches are to be conducted on the attitudes towards physical education courses on the primary school students of different age groups. Kangalgil et al (2006) examined the attitudes of primary, high school and university students towards physical education courses in terms of different variables and found that attitude levels of the students towards physical education courses increase as the students grow older.

Attitude levels of secondary school students towards physical education courses differ significantly based on their status of doing physical exercises. According to our results, the attitude levels of the students who do physical exercises regularly towards physical education courses are found to be significantly higher than the students who do not do physical exercises regularly. It may be expected that the expectations of the students who have the habit of doing sports regularly from sports activities are higher than the expectations of sedentary students. For this reason, it can be thought it is a possible result that attitude levels of students who do sports regularly and have high expectations from sports activities towards physical education courses are higher. Hence, research findings in the literature support this argument (Zengin, 2013; Chung & Philips;2002; Çelik & Pular,2011).

The states of students' practicing sports in a sports club and participating in sports competitions are found to be an important determining factor on attitude levels towards physical education courses. Accordingly, it is concluded that attitude levels of the students practicing sports in a sports club are significantly higher than those students who do not practice sports in a club. In a similar study conducted by Alparslan (2008), it is found that students participating in sports activities with formal licenses have



higher attitude levels towards physical education courses than those students without formal licenses. Fundamental reason of this result is that students with formal licenses come together with physical education teachers in extracurricular activities and trainings more frequently and have disciplined approach toward learning from training sessions. In Karadağ (2010)'s study on primary and high school students, it is found that students who practice sports in a sports club have higher attitude levels towards physical education courses than those students without club membership. Similar study results in the literature show that students with formal sports activities have higher attitude levels towards physical education courses (Balyan et al, 2012; Doğan, 2011; Hünük, 2006). As a result of extensive evaluation of literature shows that our findings are supported by the literature results and in parallel with those results.

In conclusion, it is determined that most of the primary school students participated in our study do physical exercises regularly and mostly have high level of attitude towards physical education courses, that attitude levels towards physical education courses do not differ depending on age and gender. Besides this, it is found that the students' practicing sports in a sports clubs and participating formal matches affect their attitude towards physical education courses positively.

## SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings obtained through literature review, in order that students to be healthy it is suggested that they should start doing exercises and sports activities in early ages and render these activities life-style activities.

In this scope, families should prioritize exercise and sports activities among social activities for their children. Students should be directed to sports clubs depending on their talents and should be encouraged to do sports activities by their physical education teachers and school principles.

Successful sports students must be rewarded and introduced to other students in special events for motivation enhancing reasons.

It might be suggested that this study should be conducted depending on different age groups, and different school types (primary, high school, Anatolian, Super, Commerce, Religious high school etc.) and must be conducted in different regions of Turkey at state and private schools. And findings must be compared and combined.

According to our findings and research results, in order to increase attitudes of secondary school students toward physical education courses, they must be supported by their families and school administrations materially and morally. Therefore, they will set role models for other students, motivate on courses and sports and display more positive attitudes.

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