AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTS OF LEVELS OF LONELINESS AND OPTIMISM AMONG STUDENTS AT THE FACULTY OF SPORTS SCIENCES

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the effects of optimism and loneliness levels of the students at the Faculty of Sports Sciences.

For the purposes of data collection, two instruments were used: the 'UCLA Scale' which was developed by Russel et al [7] revised by Russel et al [8] and adapted into Turkish by Demir [9]; and the Optimism Scale which was developed by Balcı and Yılmaz [10] in order to explore students' levels of loneliness and optimism. These questionnaires were administered to a total of 375 students consisting of 224 male and 151 female students.

For data analysis, the SPSS statistical packet program was used for frequency analysis, and independent t-tests, one-way ANOVA and Tukey test were run to find out the source of the difference among different groups of participants. In addition, correlation analysis was performed to reveal the relationship between the students' Levels of Optimism and Loneliness.

Significant differences have been seen in the levels of optimism and loneliness among participants according to gender. (p<0,05)

According to this, averages of female students are higher than male students in levels of loneliness. In terms of levels of optimism, averages of male student are higher than female students.

Key words: *physical education, sport, loneliness, optimism*

Introduction

Nowadays, especially with developing technology, we have become a consumer society where people move away from sociability and inhabit more of an asocial lifestyle. Even the concept of family is moving rapidly from the extended family to the elementary family. Consumption has become worse with the contribution of many technological developments such as smartphones, the internet, gaming applications etc. and people have also begun to isolate themselves.

Literature mainly refers to Peplau and Periman's [1] definition of loneliness, even there are many more different descriptions of it. According to them, loneliness is a subjective psychological state which is disliked by the individual and is marked by differences between the individual's current social relations and desired social relations. Asher, Parkhurst and Williams' [2] described loneliness as a situation of lack of recognition by others, feelings of being unfamiliar and excluded, the absence of values that were apparent in earlier life, and the lack of any chance to make choices.

Seligman [3] defines optimism as a flexible way of thinking, not destructive, and a term that arises through thought. Requests are an important factor in making people pessimistic and optimistic. When people determine their targets, they show positive and determined attitudes; however if they believe that they cannot achieve them then they show less positive and less determined attitudes. Optimistic people spend more effort on tackling difficulties when they achieve more positive expectations for their results. Contrary to this, pessimistic people have negative expectations

of results and they do not expend any effort in tackling difficulties [4]. According to Hart and Hittnert [5], being optimistic saves people from depression and hopelessness.

Carver and Scheier [6] define optimism as a behaviour that consistently has the tendency of moving towards positive situations rather than negative results.

Aim

The aim of this study is to explore the effect of levels of optimism and loneliness among students at the Faculty of Sports Sciences. our study is very important in reaching solutions for relieving negative emotions such as depression, despair, etc. for individuals and investigating the relationship between loneliness and optimism and finding solutions for the problems that may arise.

Material and methods

For the purposes of data collection, two instruments were used: the 'UCLA Scale' which was developed by Russel et al [7] revised by Russel et al [8] and adapted into Turkish by Demir [9]; and the Optimism Scale which was developed by Balcı and Yılmaz [10] in order to explore students' levels of loneliness and optimism. These questionnaires were administered to a total of 375 students consisting of 224 male and 151 female students. For data analysis, the SPSS statistical packet program was used for frequency analysis, and independent t-tests, one-way ANOVA and Tukey tests were run to find out the source of the difference among different groups of participants. In addition, correlation analysis was performed to reveal the relationship between the students' Levels of Optimism and Loneliness.

SPSS 16 statistical packet programme was used to evaluate the acquired data and level of meaningfulness is accepted as (p<0,05).

Results

An insight into the gender of the participants in Table 1 showed that 59.7 % of the participants are men whereas 40.3 % of them are women. In terms of age, it was revealed that 26.4 % of the participants are between the ages 20 and below while 53.9 % of them are between 21-25 ages and 19.7 % of them are at the age of 26 and above.

As for the distribution of participants in terms of departments as indicated in Table 1, it was revealed that 27.92 % of the participants are in the Department of Coaching, 22.9 of them are in the Department of Physical Education Training, 25.1 % of them are in the Department of Sports Management and 24.8 % of them are in the Department of Recreation. Considering their grades, 25.3 % of the participants are in 1st Grade, 24.3 % of them are in 2nd Grade, 24.3% of them are in 3rd Grade and 26.1 % of them are in 4th Grade.

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As indicated in Table 2, it was found that there were statistically significant differences between men and women based on their gender regarding their Levels of Optimism (p=0,00) and Loneliness (p=0,00).

According to the above data; for the levels of optimism, female students' (=3,78±,864) average is higher than male students' (=3,25±,365) average. For the levels of loneliness; male students' (=3,84±,368) average is higher than female students' (=2,81±,124) average.

Table 1. Participants' Information in terms of Demographic Features

Gender	N	%
Men	224	59.7
Women	151	40.3
Age	N	%
Age 20 and below	99	26.4
Between 21-25 s	202	53.9
Age 26 and above	74	19.7
Department	N	%
Coaching	102	27.2
Physical Education Training	86	22.9
Sports Management	94	25.1
Recreation	93	24.8
Grade	N	%
1st Grade	95	25.3
2nd Grade	91	24.3
3rd Grade	91	24.3
4th Grade	98	26.1
Total	375	100

Table. 2 Comparison of the Participants' Levels ofLoneliness and Optimism based on Gender

Sub-Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	P(sig.)
Optimism	Men	224	3.78	,864	,741	,000*
	Women	151	3.25	,365		
Loneliness	Men	224	2.81	,124	.165	,000*
	Women	151	3.84	,368		

*: p<0,05

As indicated in Table 3 above, findings obtained from data analysis demonstrated that there were not any statistically significant differences among participants from different age groups in terms of their optimism and loneliness levels (p>0,05).

As indicated in Table 4 above, the findings obtained from the data analysis demonstrated that there were not any statistically significant differences among participants from different departments' groups in terms of their levels of optimism and loneliness (p>0,05).

The analysis of the data showed that there was a strong negative correlation between participants' optimism and their loneliness levels (r=-.796**,p<0.01).

According to this, it can be said that if participants' loneliness level increases then optimisim level decreases.

Table. 3 Comparison of Participants' Levels of Loneliness and Optimism based on Age

Scale	Age	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	P(sig.)
Optimism	20 and below	99	3.78	,312		
	between 21-25	202	3.74	,365	1,243	,348
	between 26-30	74	3.72	,234		
Loneliness	20 and below	99	3.64	,324		
	between 21-25	202	3.61	,368	2.721	,514
	between 26-30	74	3,62	,412		

*: $p < 0,05$

Table. 4 Comparison of Participants' Parental Attitudes in terms of Departments

Scale	Department	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	P(sig.)
Optimism	Physical Education Training	86	3,66	,324		
	Sports Management Coaching	94	3,68	,124	,236	,214
		102	3,62	,365		
	Recreation	93	3.64	,287		
Loneliness	Physical Education Training	86	3.32	,124		
	Sports Management Coaching	94	3.28	,235	,247	,163
		91	3.20	,135		
	Recreation	98	3.26	,247		

*: $p < 0,05$

Table. 5 Comparison of Participants' Parental Attitudes in terms of Grades

Scale	Grade	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	P(sig.)
Optimism	1st Grade	95	3,04	,485		
	2nd Grade	91	3,02	,551	,175	,368
	3rd Grade	102	3,05	,689		
	4th Grade	93	3.06	,436		
Loneliness	1st Grade	86	3.08	,248		
	2nd Grade	94	3.07	,458	,279	,247
	3rd Grade	102	3.04	,472		
	4th Grade	93	3.01	,547		

*: $p < 0,05$

Table.6 Analysis of Correlation between Participants' Levels of Optimism and Loneliness

Sub-dimensions		Loneliness
Optimism	Pearson Correlation	-.796**
	P	.000
	N	590

**: $p < 0,01$

Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between levels of loneliness and levels of optimism among sports science faculty students. The following conclusions were reached:

To compare the levels of optimism of participants according to their gender; male students are more optimistic than female students. The reasons for this result might be the fact that men are not obliged to take care of the home due to social pressure; it may be due to the limited availability of jobs in public institutions after graduation and the concerns they have about the future due to insufficient private business opportunities.

Parmaksız [11] considered teaching candidates in his study and found that female students were more optimistic than male students. Eryilmaz [12] considered university students, and Bostanci and his colleague [13] considered young people aged between 11-13 who include both sports students as well as those who do not study sports. Neither Eryilmaz nor Bostanci and his colleagues found significant differences in levels of optimism according to gender.

Comparing the levels of loneliness of participants according to their gender; female students are lonelier than male students. This situation has social origins; it may be due to the fact that women have less social life than men, especially since they should pay attention to their intimacy with the opposite gender.

Prof. Kalkan researched levels of loneliness among individuals who have physical disabilities in his study and reached the conclusion that men are lonlier than women. However, there are many researche studies which show that levels of loneliness do not differ according to gender [14]. These findings conflict with our findings.

A significant negative correlation was found between levels of loneliness and levels of optimism among participants. In other words, as the loneliness levels of participants increased, their optimistic attitudes decreased. According to prof. Lake, lonely people are individuals who display symptoms of depression, angerand misunderstanding [15]. In the light of this definition, it can be interpreted that the increase of loneliness among individuals reduces optimistic perspectives towards life [16].

In conclusion, individuals with strong level of loneliness have a pessimistic structure, and considering that this situation triggers anger, misunderstanding, depression, and related emotions then precautions should be taken to reduce loneliness. For this purpose, personal development seminars can be organized, psychological help can be obtained, and a social and sharing lifestyle can be gained through various hobbies and courses. In this way, young people who take up the sports training can develop a social life; loneliness levels can be reduced and they can provide better services in their field.

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