

African Educational Research Journal
Vol. 11(2), pp. 175-181, March 2023
DOI: 10.30918/AERJ.112.23.018
ISSN: 2354-2160
Full Length Research Paper

# Examination of the social physical anxiety levels of adult individuals going to the gym (for Diyarbakir Province)

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Accepted 27 March, 2023

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to examine the social physical anxiety levels of adults who go to the gym. As the research was designed, it consists of adult individuals who go to the gym in Diyarbakir. A total of 242 adults, 98 females and 144 males, go to the gym. Social physical anxiety scale developed by Hart et al. (1989) and adapted to Turkish culture by Mülazımoğlu-Ballı and Asçı (2006) was used. In addition, the personal information of athletes was gathered through the "Personal Information Form" created by some researchers. In the analysis process of the data taken in this research, descriptive statistical methods, t-test for independent samples and one-way analysis of variance methods were used in this study, in accordance with the research design according to whether they show a normal distribution or not, by examining the data in the analysis process. The analyzes were made in the SPSS.22 package program and the relevance level was determined as p < 0.05 in the study. As a result of this study, in terms of the age variable, between the individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 and those aged 26 and over, in favor of the individuals between the ages of 22 and 25, and those aged 26 and over, in favor of the individuals between the ages of 22 and 25. It was concluded that the single participants had a higher level of social physical anxiety than the married participants, and the participants with a lower level of education had a higher level of social physical anxiety.

**Keywords:** Exercise, social physical anxiety.

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### INTRODUCTION

Recently, the psychological characteristics of individuals such as the level of satisfaction with their own bodies, their concerns about their appearance, and the relationship between those characteristics and participation in physical activity are frequently included in the research (Mulazımoğlu Ballı and Aşçı, 2006).

Negative thoughts that others have or assume to have about their physical appearance, and the pressures created by the ideal body understanding in society that contribute to the physical development of individuals may cause them to move away from exercise which contributes to reducing the negative situations about their appearance (Brunet and Sabiston, 2009). While

dissatisfaction with the physical appearance of individuals contributes to taking part in physical activity, it can also be a consideration for not taking part in physical activity because of the possibility of encountering negative thoughts due to physical dissatisfaction. Therefore, SPA is a factor of psychology that should be analyzed in an exercise atmosphere, and this has been a widely known research topic by researchers in the field of sports and exercise psychology (Mulazımoğlu Ballı et al., 2006).

Studies in the field of exercise mostly concentrated on SPA and the attitude toward exercise. While a number of those studies have accessed a positive or negative relationship between SPA and taking part in exercise, some of them did not. These contradictory findings created a possibility that factors such as sex, grief and depression might be effectual in the relationship between SPA and exercise (Tenebaum and Eklund, 2007). As an example, while there has been a negative relationship between SPA and taking part in working out in young people, any relationship has not been found among adults (Lantz et al., 1997; Treasure et al., 1998). Nonetheless, it was explained that the level of SPA in adult females taking part in exercise may be interrelated to their representation of themselves. In a study, a negative correlation was observed between SPA and physical activity level in an adult female with normal and higher representation levels, while no correlation resulted between physical activity level and SPA level in the female with lower own-representation (Wininger, 2007).

Most researchers got a higher level of correlation between taking part in working out and SPA (Hausenblas and Fallon, 2006: Hausenblas et al., 2004: Koca and Asçı, 2006). Asci et al. (2006) explained that people with higher SPA levels work out more than people with lower SPA levels. At the same time, Gökce et al. (2010) found that individuals who get engaged in physical activity in their leisure time have lower SPA levels than those who do not get engaged in physical activity in their spare time (Gökçe et al., 2010). In addition to this, Koca and Asçı (2006) found out that people keep away from exercise because they are worried about being judged by others during exercise (Koca and Asçı, 2006). Lantz et al. (1997) also explained that individuals with higher levels of SPA keep away from exercises that stand out their body shape (including beneficial aerobic exercise ) and try harmful ways for their appearance (such as rapid loss of weight diets) (Hart et al., 1989). With those considerations, Frederick and Morrison (1996) perceived that there have been higher levels of SPA in nonexercisers and excessive exercisers (Frederick and Morrison, 1996).

In contrast to those results, some latest studies have shown that taking part in exercise does not have relation to SPA (Asçı, Tüzün and Koca, 2006; Mülazımoğlu-Ballı and Asci, 2004). By taking into account the incompatible information about the aspect of the relationship between SPA and attitude toward exercise, it is suggested that body image may be a significant variable that determines the aspect of this relationship. It is clearly stated that SPA is not important in the tendency of working out for individuals who love their own body; on the other hand, SPA is effective in the tendency of working out for individuals who are not satisfied with their own body (Atalay and Gençöz, 2008). A parallel relationship is seen in nutrition behavior. Sabiston et al., (2007) stated that both nutrition and working out are interrelated in controlling the higher level of SPA (Sabiston et al., 2007).

Studies investigating the relationship between SPA and attitude in working out also focus on the place of exercise, the type of exercise, the clothes worn during

exercise, persistence in participating in working out, and several psychological factors. It is stated in studies that those with higher SPA levels are apt to take part in physical activity on their own rather than in an opposite (crowded) atmosphere (Spink, 1992). Calogero (2004) argued that the privacy of exercising at home or other places provides the necessary loneliness and lowers the probability of negative evaluation of those with higher SPA (Calogro, 2004). Eklund and Crawford (1994) stated that individuals with a higher SPA level are unwilling to exercise in crowded environments and do not want to take part (Eklund and Crawford, 1994). In a study of female university students, Crawford and Eklund (1994) also found that an exercise atmosphere that stands out in physical appearance or does not stand out physical appearance are significantly associated with SPA (Crawford and Eklund, 1994). Brewer et al. (2004), on the other hand, stated that when an exerciser with a higher SPA takes part in a sports group in a public environment. they mostly prefer a place where physical judges will be minimal, such as the back of the classroom or a gym. (Brewer et al., 2004).

Hart et al. (1989) and Ntoumanis (2005) reported that although men have lower SPA levels than women, they have higher levels of motivation and physical activity (Hart et al., 1989) and that they are at more advanced stages of the exercise attitude step. (Fox and Corbin, 1989; Motl and Conroy, 2001; Page and Fox, 1997). Similar to these findings, it resulted that people with higher SPA have a lower inclination to go on physical activity, and those with lower SPA have a higher inclination to go on physical activity (Finkenberg et al., 1998; Frederick and Morrison, 1996; Lantz et al., 1997). There are many studies showing that the term SPA, which plays an important role in determining an individual's exercise behavior, is also effective in revealing the reasons for participation in exercise.

In this context, the purpose of this research was determined as examining the social physical anxiety levels of adult individuals who go to the gym in Diyarbakır.

# **METHOD**

## Research model

Scanning model was used in the research. The scanning model is known as a research model that purposes to explain the variation and/or degree amongst two or more variables (Karasar, 2009).

## Research group

As the research was designed, it consists of adult individuals living in Diyarbakır and going to the gym. The

research consists of 98 females and 144 males, totalling 242 adult individuals.

## Data collection tools

In this research, Personal Information Form and Social Physics Anxiety Scale, which were prepared by the researcher in accordance with its design, were used fittingly with its purpose. Information on the measurement tools used in the research is given below.

# Social physics anxiety scale (SPAS)

The scale developed by Hart et al. (1989) to determine the level of social physical anxiety consists of 12 items. The items in the scale are answered using a five-point scale (totally wrong, usually wrong, sometimes wrong sometimes right, usually right, totally right) and the total score of the scale varies between 12 and 60.

Studies (Eklund et al., 1996) have revealed that SPAS consists of two sub-dimensions: the comfort of physical appearance (the individual's discomfort about his physical appearance) and the expectation of negative evaluation (the expectation that his appearance will be judged by others). The first validity and reliability study of the original scale for the population of Türkiye was carried out on 1005 participants by Mülazımoğlu-Ballı and Asçı (2006). As a result of the principal components analysis. two factors were found and it was concluded that 12 items in the scale explained 44.86% of the scale for 1005 students. To test the criterion validity of the scale, the coefficient of correlation (between 0.43 and 0.57) calculated between the social physic anxiety and body image satisfaction scores supports the criterion validity of the SPA. The test-retest correlation coefficient of the scale was 0.88 for girls and 0.81 for boys for the whole scale. The internal consistency coefficient for the whole scale was 0.77 in the sub-dimension of " the comfort of physical appearance, 0.69 in the sub-dimension of "the negative evaluation expectation" in the two-factor structure, and 0.80 in the single-factor structure (Mulazımoğlu Ballı and Asçı, 2006). In our study, the internal consistency coefficient was taken to be 0.38 in the sub-dimension of "the physical appearance comfort", 0.64 in the sub-dimension of " the negative evaluation expectation", and 0.55 in the total scale.

## Personal data form

The personal data form was designed by the researcher in order for achieving the purpose of the research, to obtain demographic data about the athletes and to obtain information on gender, age, marital status and educational status.

#### Data collection

The scale and personal data form were put to use by the adult individuals who went to the gym in the province of Diyarbakır, who took part in the research by using the purposeful exemplification method, by face-to-face interview method.

# Analysis of data

In the analysis process of the data obtained in this research, descriptive statistics methods, t-test for independent instances and one-way analysis of variance methods were taken to use in this study, in accordance with the research design according to whether they show normal distribution or not, in accordance with the statistical assumptions (Alpar, 2010). The analyzes were made in the SPSS.22 package program and the level of relevance in the study was stated as p < 0.05.

### RESULTS

The demographic information of the adult people taking part in the study who go to the gym and the statistical results of the scale applied are given in the tables below.

As shown in Table 1, a total of 242 individuals took part in our research, 29.8% of whom were aged 18 to 21, 29.8% were aged 22 to 25, and 40.5 were 26 years and over. 40.5% of them are female and 59.5% are male. While 31.4% of the individuals participating in the research were married, 68.6% stated that they were single. Individuals with primary and high school graduates constitute 44.6% of the participants, while individuals with bachelor's and postgraduate degrees constitute 55.4%.

As shown in Table 2, no significant difference was acquired in the answers given to the entire social physical anxiety scale according to the age variable of the adult individuals who go to the gym (p > 0.05). However, a significant difference was acquired in the sub-dimension of physical appearance comfort (p < 0.05). After the analyzes made to understand between which age groups this significant difference is, it has been a difference between individuals aged 18 and 21 and those aged 26 and over, in favor of individuals aged 18 to 21, and between individuals aged 22 and 25, and individuals aged 26 and over, it has been found to be in favor of individuals between the ages of 22 and 25.

As a result of the statistical analyses, no significant difference was taken in the answers given to the entire social physical anxiety scale and its sub-dimensions according to the gender variable of adult individuals who go to the gym (p > 0.05) (Table 3).

As a result of the statistical analyses, significant differences were found in the answers given to the social

**Table 1.** Findings regarding the demographic variables of the research group.

Variables	Groups	N	%
	18-21	72	29.8
Ago	22-25	72	29.8
Age	26 and over	98	40.5
	Total	242	100
	Female	98	40.5
Gender	Male	144	59.5
	Total	242	100
	Married	76	31.4
Marital status	Single	166	68.6
	Total	242	100
	Primary or High School	108	44.6
Education	Bachelor's or Postgraduate	134	55.4
	Total	242	100

**Table 2.** One-way Anova test results regarding Social Physical Anxiety Scale (SPAS) and its sub-dimensions by age variable of the research group.

Scale and sub-dimensions	Age	N	$\overline{X}$	Ss	F	Р	Post-Hoc
	18-21 (1)	72	17.67	4.09			4.0
Physical appearance comfort	22-25 (2)	72	17.28	4.73	7.37	0.00*	1-3
	26 and over (3)	98	15.37	3.93			2-3
	18-21 (1)	72	16.14	5.56			
Negative evaluation expectation	22-25 (2)	72	14.89	4.81	1.58	0.21	
	26 and over (3)	98	16.06	4.26			
	18-21 (1)	72	33.81	7.48			
SPAS (total)	22-25 (2)	72	32.17	7.26	2.48	0.09	
	26 and over (3)	98	31.43	6.24			

<sup>\*</sup> p < 0.05 relevance level.

Table 3. T-test results for Social Physical Anxiety Scale (SPAS) and its sub-dimensions by gender variable of the research group.

Scale and sub-dimensions	Gender	N	$\overline{X}$	Ss	t	df	Р
Dhysical apparatos comfort	Female	98	17.57	4.36	2.86	240	0.72
Physical appearance comfort	Male	144	15.97	4.22			
Negative evaluation expectation	Female	98	13.73	4.27	-5.62	240	0.59
Negative evaluation expectation	Male	144	17.10	4.76			
ODAO /Tatal)	Female	98	31.31	6.90	4.04	240	0.73
SPAS (Total)	Male	144	33.07	6.96	-1.94		

physical anxiety scale and its sub-dimensions according to the marital status variable of the adult individuals who

go to the gym (p < 0.05) (Table 4). Considering the averages, this significant difference was found to be in

Table 4. T-test findings for Social Physical Anxiety Scale (SPAS) and its sub-dimensions by marital statu	s variable of the
research group.	

Scale and sub-dimensions	Marital status	N	$\overline{X}$	Ss	t	df	Р
Dhysical appearance comfort	Married	76	15.71	3.84	0.00	240	0.04*
Physical appearance comfort	Single	166	17.04	4.50	-2.22		0.04*
Magative evaluation expectation	Married	76	16.03	4.29	0.62	240	0.00*
Negative evaluation expectation	Single	166	15.60	5.09	0.63		
CDAC (Total)	Married	76	31.74	5.77	0.00	240	0.00*
SPAS (Total)	Single	166	32.64	7.46	-0.93	240	0.00*

<sup>\*</sup> p < 0.05 relevance level.

favor of singles in the "comfort of physical appearance" sub-dimension, in favor of married people in the sub-dimension of "negative evaluation expectation", and in favor of singles in the total scale.

As a result of the statistical analyses, significant differences were determined in accordance with the answers given to the entire social physical anxiety scale and its sub-dimensions according to the educational status variable of adult individuals who go to the gym (p < 0.05) (Table 5). Considering the averages, this significant difference was found to be in favor of primary or high school graduates in the sub-dimensions of "comfort of physical appearance", "expectation of negative evaluation" and in the total scale.

**Table 5.** T-test results of the Social Physical Anxiety Scale (SPAS) and its sub-dimensions by the educational status variable of the research group.

Scale and sub-dimensions		Education	N	$\overline{X}$	Ss	t	df	Р
Physical appearance comfort		Primary or High School	108	16.80	3.74	0.57	240	0.02*
		Bachelor's or Postgraduate	134	16.48	4.78	0.57		
Negative	evaluation	Primary or High School	108	17.56	4.02	F FC	040	0.00*
expectation		Bachelor's or Postgraduate	134	14.27	4.98	5.56	240	0.00*
CDAC (Tatal)		Primary or High School	108	34.35	5.68	4.40	040	0.04*
SPAS (Total)		Bachelor's or Postgraduate	134	30.75	7.51	4.13	240	0.01*

<sup>\*</sup> p < 0.05 relevance level.

# **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In this research, "does the social physical anxiety of adult individuals participating in the research differ according to age, sex, marital status, and educational status?" The answers to the questions have been searched.

A total of 242 individuals, 29.8% of whom are aged 18-21, 29.8% aged 22-25, and 40.5 aged 26 and over, continued in the gym included in our research group. 40.5% of them are women and 59.5% are men. While 31.4% of the individuals participating in the research were married, 68.6% stated that they were single. Individuals with primary and high school graduates constitute 44.6% of the participants, while individuals with bachelor's and postgraduate degrees constitute 55.4%.

Considering the data obtained in the study, when the

social physical anxiety levels of the participants were examined according to the age variable, it was found that there was no significant difference in the whole "Social Physical Anxiety Scale". However, a significant difference was found in the "comfort of physical appearance" subdimension. When we look at which groups this significant difference is between, there is a difference between individuals aged 18-21 and those aged 26 and over, in favor of individuals aged 18-21, and between individuals aged 22-25 and individuals aged 26 and over, was found to be in favor of individuals aged 22-25. This result shows that as age increases, the level of anxiety arising from the comfort of physical appearance decreases. When the literature is examined, the findings obtained in studies with adolescents and university students give proof to our study. The reason for the higher level of social physical

anxiety in the young group is the negative perception of young individuals regarding their body image and the excessive importance of their appearance (Çepikkurt and Coşkun, 2010; Doğan, 2010; Doğan, 2011). In another study conducted on the adolescence period, it was revealed that the social physical anxiety levels of individuals in adolescence are higher, and the level of anxiety decreases with increasing age (Ergür, 1996; Güneş, 2009; Uğurlu and Akın, 2008). In the literature, some studies support our study as well as studies that do not. In the study conducted by Gümüş (2017), İzgiç et al. (2000), the sub-dimensions of SPAS according to the age variable; it was seen that the level of physical appearance comfort anxiety and negative evaluation expectation anxiety did not differ statistically in a significant level.

Considering the data obtained from the research, when the social physical anxiety levels of the participants were examined according to the gender variable, no significant difference was realized in the whole and sub-dimensions of the "Social Physical Anxiety Scale". When the literature was examined, it showed that no significant difference was accessed between the social and physical anxiety scores of Abanoz (2016), Eriş and İkiz (2013), Erkan (2002), Mehtalia and Vankar (2004) when they are compared according to the gender variable. These studies support our study. In addition to these studies, some studies determined that the gender variable is effective on social physical anxiety levels (Aşçı, 2002; Berry and Howe, 2004; Eklund et al., 1997; Haase et al., 2002: Hart et al., 1989: Kruisselbrink et al. 2004: Martin and Mack, 1996). In these studies, it is stated that women have more social and physical anxiety than men.

Considering the data obtained from the research, when the social physical anxiety levels of the participants were examined according to the marital status variable, a significant difference was found in the whole and subdimensions of the "Social Physical Anxiety Scale". When we look at the average of the answers given to the scale in order to understand which group this differentiation is in favor of, it has been determined that the average of single individuals is higher. This result can be interpreted as the anxiety levels of single individuals being higher. When we look at the literature, there are not many studies on the marital status variable. It could not be reached that any study that supports the result of this study. Şahin (2018) concluded in his study that marital status has no effect on social physical anxiety levels.

Considering the data obtained from the research, when the social physical anxiety levels of the participants were analyzed for the educational status variable, a significant difference was found in the whole and sub-dimensions of the "Social Physical Anxiety Scale". When we look at the average of the answers given to the scale in order to understand which group this differentiation favors, it has been determined that primary or high school graduates are higher than bachelor's or postgraduate degrees. This

result can be interpreted as primary or high school graduates having higher social and physical anxiety levels. When the literature is examined, it could be found some studies on the education level variable. Among these studies, Eren (2012) found that those with a lower level of education had higher anxiety levels. This result supports our study. Şahin (2018), on the other hand, concluded in his study that education status does not have an effect on the level of social physical anxiety.

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**Citation:** Ateş, N., and Ateş, H. (2023). Examination of the social physical anxiety levels of adult individuals going to the gym (for Diyarbakir Province). African Educational Research Journal, 11(2): 175-181.