

Examining Effect of Participating to Recreational Activities on Loneliness Level of Middle School Students

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Abstract The present study aimed to investigate middle school students' loneliness level according to participating in recreation activities, the way of participation in recreation activities, and the gender and marital status of the parents. The study sample consisted of voluntarily participated 330 students (184 females and 146 males). The easy sampling method preferred in the present study. The face-to-face survey method was used to collect the data. In the study 'UCLA Loneliness Scale' developed by Russell et al. [7] and adapted to Turkish by Demir [2] and a questionnaire form consisting of 4 questions developed by the researcher are used as data gathering tool. The data obtained for the research were first transferred to the computer and then analyzed by the SPSS program. The error margin level in the study was taken as $p < 0.05$. The Cronbach alpha of the study was found to be 0.80. As a result, there were not any significant differences between loneliness level of participant and their gender ($p > 0.05$). But between the participant's loneliness level and participating in recreation activities, the way of participation in recreation activities and the marital status of the parents, there were statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$).

Keywords Recreation, Sport, Loneliness, Students

1. Introduction

Loneliness in childhood and adolescence has received considerable empirical attention over the past two decades [11]. Feeling lonely is a sad but relatively common experience for children in school-age children [21]. When loneliness becomes a frequently occurring phenomenon, there are serious implications for emotional and physical well-being [3]. Schools are obliged not only to provide information but also to socialize the individual. In this respect, leisure education is given importance by education institutions regarding evaluation of non-school hours of

students. Where leisure education is not emphasized, individuals face various obstacles and use time inefficiently [5]. Loneliness is a multidimensional concept with different meanings under different causes and conditions [19]. Loneliness is defined by different authors in different ways. Some writers see it as a situation with objective conditions, others as completely subjective, and some as existential. The common feature of all of them is that the concept of loneliness is a painful emotional state [12]. Several definitions of loneliness are given by some authors as follows: According to Peplau and Perlman, loneliness is a mental state [4], which is the result of perceiving the difference between an individual's existing social relationship and the desired social relationship; according to Duyan et al. [24], a process that exists for all mankind and will exist in the future; according to Davis [3], it is an experience that is unpleasant but common among children, young people and adults; according to Demir and Tarhan [1], it is a common phenomenon especially in adolescence because puberty is an important and developmental process; according to Kızar [20], facing with a negative situation; Rook [9], defines it as an ever-increasing feeling when one is rejected by others, is misunderstood, and has no suitable friends or partners to perform the desired activities. It is known that recreation activities have an important place in solving loneliness and these activities provide positive contributions not only to the feeling of loneliness of the individual but also to the physical, social and emotional development. These activities make talents such as creativity and leadership functional, and they develop personality characteristics such as aggression, determination, harmony, productive, decisive, mutual respect and understanding, adherence to rules, cooperation, independence, self-discipline, and diligence [15]. It is clear that a healthy society consists of physically and psychologically healthy individuals [18].

In this respect, the increase of the relations between the individuals by using the integrating and socializing feature of the sport shows that the social structure is a necessity for the participation of the individual in sportive and

recreational activities and the completion of the adolescence period in which the personality structure starts to sit in a physically and socially healthy manner [5]. That is why our motivation in this study was to investigate the effect of gender, participating recreation activities, the way of participation to recreation activities and marital status of the parents on loneliness level of middle school students to see the positive and negative effect of variables.

2. Materials and Methods

This section includes the model of the group, the data collection tool, analyses, methods and techniques related to the solution of the data.

2.1. Research Model

The research was based on a quantitative research design and descriptive cross-sectional study. A general screening model was applied to arrive at a general judgment about the universe, in which the whole universe or a sample taken from it was scanned [17].

2.2. Research Sample

The research sample consisted of a total of 365 randomly chosen middle school students from Fatih and Dumlupınar middle schools in the Kütahya city center voluntarily participated in the study. The 35 scales thought to be missing or inaccurate were not evaluated. Finally, a total of 330 ages ranged from 10 to 14 years old (12.56 ± 1.49) middle school students comprised of 146 males and 184 females were selected by the purposive sampling method.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

In addition to the "Demographic Information Form" which questioned the demographic characteristics of the students in the research, "UCLA Loneliness Scale" was used. UCLA Loneliness Scale: consists of 20 items (11 positives and 9 negatives), describing the subjective feeling of loneliness, none of which refers specifically to loneliness. Consequently, the scale does not directly measure states that laypeople attribute as loneliness, but rather the scale measures a theoretically defined and scientifically validated understanding of loneliness. The 20 items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale following the rate of frequency, ranging from never (1) to always (4). Scores on the scale range from 20 to 80 with higher scores reflecting greater loneliness [7]. The study of the validity and reliability of the scale in our country was carried out by Demir [2]. The internal consistency factor of the Turkish version of the scale is .96, and test-retest reliability is .94. Scale 1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 19 and 20 are reverse coded.

2.4. Analysis of Data

For the data obtained in the study, the SPSS package program was used, and frequency (f) and percent (%) distributions of the variables were calculated. The histograms, Skewness, and Kurtosis values were checked to ensure the normal distribution of the data. The Skewness and Kurtosis were considered to be valued -2 to $+2$ [6]. Therefore, the t-test and ANOVA test were used. Significance set at $p < 0.05$ and results were considered significant with 95% confidence interval.

3. Findings

Table 1. Demographic distribution of participants

Variable		f	%
Gender	Female	184	55,8
	Male	146	44,2
	Total	330	100,0
The way of participation to recreation activities	Usually alone	44	13,3
	Usually with family	53	16,1
	Usually with friends	189	57,3
	With guidance of an expert	44	13,3
	Total	330	100,0
Participating to recreation activities	Yes	190	57,7
	No	140	42,3
	Toplam	330	100,0
Marital status of the parents	Together	49	14,8
	Separate	281	85,2
	Total	330	100,0

Table 2. T-test result according to gender

		n	\bar{x}	sd	t	p
Loneliness	Female	184	50,9	6,86	1,37	,17*
	Male	146	49,9	6,73		

* $p > 0,05$; ** $p < 0,01$

Table 2 shows the t test analyses results of participants' gender differences. According to this result, there is no any significant difference on loneliness level of female and male students ($p > 0,05$).

Table 3. T-test result according to marital status of the parents

		n	\bar{x}	sd	t	p
Loneliness	Together	49	48,6	7,55	-2,09	,03*
	Separate	281	50,8	6,64		

* $p < 0,05$; ** $p < 0,01$

Table 3 shows the t test analyses results of parents' marital status. According to this result, marital status of the parents' has a significant effect on loneliness level of students ($p < 0,05$). It is seen that students whose parents are living together ($\bar{x} = 48,6$) feel less loneliness than the students whose parents are separate ($\bar{x} = 50,8$).

Table 4. T-test result according to participating recreational activities

		n	\bar{x}	sd	t	p
Loneliness	Yes	190	49,7	7,16	-2,47	,01*
	No	140	51,5	6,18		

* $p < 0,05$; ** $p < 0,01$

Table 4 shows the t test analyses results of participating to the recreational activities. According to this result, recreational activities has a significant effect on loneliness level of students ($p < 0,05$). It is seen that students who participate recreational activities ($\bar{x} = 49,7$) feel less loneliness than the students who doesn't ($\bar{x} = 51,5$).

Table 5. ANOVA test result according to the way of participating to the recreation activities

		n	\bar{x}	sd	f	p	Tukey
Loneliness	Usually alone	106	48,6	7,08	2,88	,023	1, 2-3*
	Usually with family	60	53,1	6,83			
	Usually with friends	73	51,3	6,40			
	With guidance of an expert	91	50,4	6,13			
	Total	330	50,5	6,81			

* $p < 0,05$; ** $p < 0,01$

Table 5 shows the ANOVA analyses results according to the way of participating to the recreation activities. According to this result, recreational activities has a significant effect on loneliness level of students ($p < 0,05$). Tukey test was applied to see the differences between groups. According to result, the difference was observed between students who attend in recreational activities usually alone and students who participate with family and friends ($p < 0,05$).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this section, the results of the loneliness levels of the students at the middle school level are examined and interpreted.

The t-test was used to find the effect of gender on loneliness. Findings demonstrated that statistically no significant difference is found between the gender change and loneliness levels of the students participating in the research ($p > 0,05$). This result is parallel to some studies in the literature. According to Cassidy and Asher [9], no statistically significant difference is found between loneliness and gender in children and adolescents. Also

according to Ekinçi et al. [16], no statistically significant difference is found between gender and loneliness of high school students. But, according to the studies of Yılmaz et al. [8] and Eskin [14], the level of loneliness among secondary school students is found to vary according to gender. Future research should aim to provide a deeper understanding of the differential effect of gender on loneliness level of middle school students.

The t-test was used to find out whether the level of the loneliness of the participants varied according to the marital status of the parents. Statistically, a significant result was found ($p < 0,05$). Results show that students whose parents are living together feel less loneliness than the students whose parents are separate. This result is parallel to the study of Körler [25]. According to the study of Körler the loneliness level of students whose parents are living together is less than students whose parents are living separately.

The t-test was used to find out the effect of recreational activities on loneliness. Findings demonstrated that statistically, a significant difference was found between the participating in the recreational activities and loneliness level of the students ($p < 0,05$). There are two possible explanations for this expected result. First, recreational activities help students to become more social [10]. Second, above and beyond an individual's response to loneliness, students' awareness of their acceptance by peers in various contexts should be considered.

ANOVA test was used to find out the effect of the way of participating in the recreational activities. Findings demonstrated that statistically, a significant difference was found between the way of participating in the recreational activities and loneliness level of the students ($p < 0,05$). The difference was observed between students who attend in recreational activities usually alone and students who participate with family and friends. According to Heredia et al. [10], students those with high levels of peer support had low levels of loneliness than students with low levels of peer support. We may say that having good peer and family relationships is better for low level of loneliness. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that peer support is an important contributor to wellbeing for middle school students [11]. Study of Boivin and Hymel [13] support this result. According to Boivin and Hymel, being more socially withdrawn is associated with loneliness in elementary school. Also similar result can be found in the study of Woodhouse et al. [23]. According to Woodhouse et al, "when peer relations go well for adolescents, adolescents are less likely to be lonely".

4.1. Limitations and Suggestions

The present study has a number of limitations. This study is limited with middle school students who study regularly at the city center of the Kütahya. Loneliness in children is a relatively new research topic. It can show as

an obstacle for a more comprehensive study that there are not enough studies which relate to recreation and loneliness and the researchers exist are mostly studied for adults. Therefore, it is thought that studies in this area should be increased. Also, further studies may focus on larger example groups. Family economic conditions also can be an important factor to control for further studies, and it will be an excellent factor to check. As suggested in this study, factors such as peer support and family support are important predictors of loneliness for middle school students who are lonely. Also school counselors, administrators and parents can use the results of this study to protect students from negative effect of loneliness.

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