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The Effect of Outdoor Sports as Undergraduate Elective Course on Environmental Sensitivity

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the views of students who take or do not take outdoor sports as undergraduate elective course at different departments of Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University on environmental sensitivity. The study group consists of 288 undergraduate students with a mean age of 20.9 ± 2.19 studying at the Faculty of Education, Vocational School of Higher Education, Faculty of Dentistry, and Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences. Of the students, 140 (90 males and 50 females) take Outdoor Sports as an elective course. Scanning method was employed in the study. A questionnaire on environmental sensitivity to determine the students' knowledge, sensitivity and attitudes was conducted randomly as data instrument. In the evaluation of data, aside from descriptive statistical methods (arithmetic average, standard deviation, frequency-percentage), normality test was made for all variables in the research. All the variables comply with the normal distribution at $p < 0.05$ significance level. T-test was conducted for the independent variable in between-group comparisons of the parameters, with a statistical significance at $p < 0.05$ level. Within this study, a statistically significant difference was found between the general score averages of student views on environmental sensitivity by gender ($p = 0.047$). However, as far as taking Outdoor Sports as elective is concerned, there was not a statistically significant difference between the general score averages of student views on environmental sensitivity ($p = .693$). There was also no statistically significant difference between the general score averages of the views on environmental sensitivity of students who take and do not take the elective outdoor sports course ($p < 0.05$).

Keywords: outdoor sports, mountaineering, environmental sensitivity, college students

1. Introduction

The space units where living beings are connected, affected and influenced by vital bonds are called the living environment or the environment of that living community (Atasoy, 2006). One of the most important tasks of every society for sustainable living is to equip children with attitudes, values, knowledge and skills necessary to protect the environment. For this reason, environmental education is of vital importance. Environmental education is about ethics and actions, and this is not just a subject to be learned, but a way of thinking and behavior (Davis, 1998). Although the relations between man and his environment, and between other creatures and the natural environment changed from the early years of humanity to the industrial revolution, this continued in a partial harmony. However, with the industrialization, the economic and social structure, habits and behaviors of societies have changed (Şafak & Erkal, 1999).

Individuals who are responsible for the occurrence of environmental problems should fulfill their responsibilities in solving these problems. This will only be possible through effective environmental education (Altın et al., 2002; Soran, 2000). Human-nature relations constitute the main source of the current environmental problems faced by humanity. While human beings fought the forces of nature in the beginning, they have nowadays started to dominate the nature and consumed natural resources rapidly (Dastan, 1999). Today the concurrent require a high level of professionalism, mostly because of the enormous size of the material profits and losses and this creates a big pressure and stress on the human. So, there is a need of a very good management of the environment to over come this pressure and to realize the humans (Aybek et al., 2019).

Each community has its own educational system. This system is established, formed and developed according to the cultural, social, economic characteristics and values of the society. Each education system reflects the values that are valid within that society and fulfills the tasks expected by that community (Hesapçıoğlu, 2008).

Environmental education should be seen as a perfect basis not only as part of the education process but also as a new life style where a new life style could flourish compatible with the environment, and should be able to adapt to different socio-economic and cultural structures and different living conditions within different age groups and consider regional and national differences (Kavruk, 2002). Through environmental education, it is aimed to enable people to comprehend the ecological balance and their own place in this balance, develop views on how they can live in harmony with the planet, and acquire the necessary skills for effective and responsible participation (Geray, 1995). Today, environmental problems are not a problem that can only be solved by technology or law. This is only possible by changing individual behaviors. The change of behavior necessitates the change of attitude, knowledge and value judgments. Positive attitude towards the environment and the formation of value judgments are possible with environmental education (Erten, 2000).

The aim of this study is to examine the opinions of students who are studying at different departments of Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University and who take and do not take outdoor sports elective course.

For this purpose, an answer to the question whether gender and taking the outdoor sports course have made a difference was sought.

2. Method

2.1 Study Group

The study group consisted of randomly selected 288 undergraduate students (200 males and 88 females) with a mean age of 20.9 ± 2.19 at Gaziosmanpaşa University Faculty of Education, Faculty of Dentistry, Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences. 140 of these students (90 males, 40 females) are students who have taken an elective joint outdoor sports course.

2.2 Instruments for Data Collection

Scanning method was used in this study. As a data collection tool, a questionnaire about environmental sensitivity developed by Çabuk and Karacaoğlu was randomly conducted for determining the environmental knowledge, sensitivity and attitudes of the students (Çabuk & Karacaoğlu, 2003). This form consists of 24 questions to determine the students' views on environmental sensitivity. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.81. In the form, there are questions about whether students are sensitive to the environment or not and whether they have enough environmental education in formal education institutions to gain environmental sensitivity. The response options for the first twenty questions vary between "Never, Sometimes, Always" while it varies between "Yes, Partly, No" for the last four questions. The response options were evaluated by considering the following score intervals. The increase in the scores obtained from the items indicates that the opinions about the environmental sensitivity have increased positively.

Option	Score Interval
Never/No	1.00–1.66
Sometimes/Partly	1.67–2.34
Always/Yes	2.35–3.00

2.3 Statistics and Data Analysis

By examining the scales, missing or anomalous observations were excluded. What was left then as valid and acceptable was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science for Personal Computers). In the evaluation of data, aside from descriptive statistical methods (arithmetic average, standard deviation, frequency-percentage), normality test was made for all variables in the research. All the variables comply with the normal distribution at $p < 0.05$ significance level. T-test was conducted for the independent variable in between-group comparisons of the parameters, with a statistical significance at $p < 0.05$ level.

3. Results

Of the family members of the participants, it was found that mothers were generally primary school graduates (57.8%) and housewives (85.4%) while fathers had higher education levels (high school graduates 42.4%) and worked as civil servants (26%). Permanent residences were found to be 53% for provinces, 30% for districts, 10% for villages, and 7% for towns.

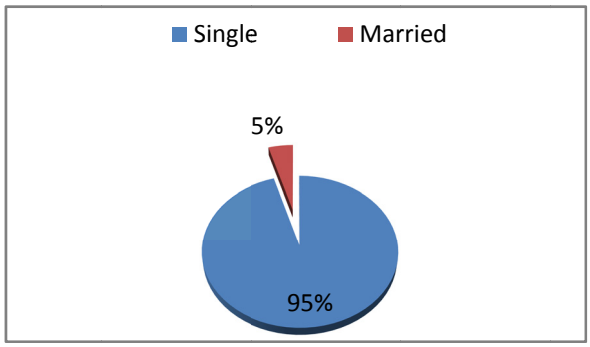

Figure 1. Students' marital status

As can be seen in Figure 1, 95% of the examined students are single while 5% of them are married.

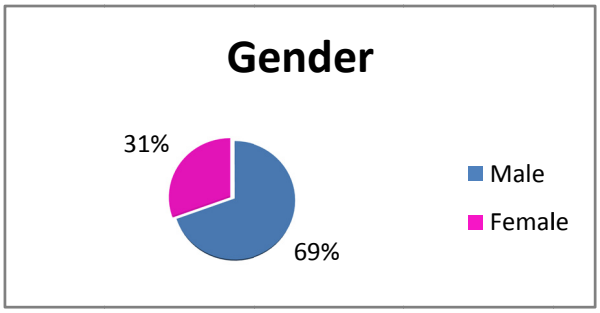

Figure 2. Gender distribution of students

Table 1. Distribution of students' recreational activities

Recreational Activities	n	%
Cinema, theater, concert, etc.	140	48.6
Reading books, newspapers, magazines	200	74.6
Attending nature excursions	105	36.4
Interest in Sports Activities	169	59
Doing recreational activities	188	65.2

When the table illustrating the distribution of students' recreational activities are examined, it can be observed that 48.6% (140 students) went to the cinema, theater or similar events, 74.6% (200 students) read books, newspapers, or magazines, 36.4% (105 students) attended nature excursions, 59% (169 students) did sports activities, and 65.2% (188 students) became interested in recreational activities in their leisure. The fact that there were no students from the School of Physical Education and Sport can account for the decrease in interest in sports activities.

Table 2. Comparison of students' environmental sensitivity by gender

Gender	Total Score	n	t	p
Female	56.20 ± 6.40	88	1.940	0.047*
Male	55.33 ± 6.78	200		

When Table 2 is observed, there is a *statistically significant difference between the overall mean scores of students' views on environmental sensitivity by gender ($p = 0.047$). The overall score averages of female students about environmental sensitivity are significantly higher than male students' mean scores ($p < 0.05$).

Table 3. Comparison of environmental sensitivity scores of students based on taking outdoor sports course

Course Status	n	Total Score	t	p
Those who take outdoor sports	140	56.71±5.13	0.395	0.693
Those who do not take outdoor sports	148	56.59±7.20		

A statistically significant difference between the overall mean scores of students' views on environmental sensitivity based on whether they took the outdoor sports course or not was not found (p = 0.693).

4. Discussion

As the dominance of man on nature increases, environmental problems arise. As a result of rapid and irregular urbanization and rapid population growth and industrialization and rapid decline in natural resources and rapid decline in natural resources, agricultural and touristic areas have narrowed. In addition to many social and economic problems, these issues caused many important environmental problems including air pollution, transportation problems, housing problems and so on (Görmez, 1991; Dastan, 1999). In their studies on environmental sensitivities of Social Sciences High School students, Aydın and Kaya (2011) emphasized that the main aim of environmental education should be to cultivate sensitive people with responsible environmental behaviors.

When the recreational activities of the participants were examined, it was observed that 48.6% (140 students) went to the cinema, theater or similar events, 74.6% (200 students) read books, newspapers, or magazines, 36.4% (105 students) attended nature excursions, 59% (169 students) did sports activities, and 65.2% (188 students) became interested in recreational activities in their leisure. The findings are in harmony with those of Balcı and Gülhan (2006), Terzioğlu and Yazıcı (2003) who examined college students in their studies.

In this study which compared the relationship between environmental sensitivity and whether students at different departments took the outdoor sports course, a statistically significant difference was observed between the overall mean scores of students' views on environmental sensitivity by gender (p = 0.047). In the studies conducted, female college students had more positive affective tendencies towards the environment than male students (Şama, 2003; Çabuk & Karacaoğlu, 2003). There is no significant difference between environmental attitude scores and whether or not the students took the nature sports course (p = 0.693). In the studies conducted by Deniş and Genç (2007), Erol and Gezer (2006), it was observed that taking environmental education course did not make a significant difference on the affective tendencies of the students. In addition, Karatekin (2011) concluded that there was no significant difference between the attitudes of the prospective teachers who took or did not take environmental courses in high school. One of the oldest criticisms directed about mere theoretical education is that it takes place behind closed doors and does not allow for authentic learning. The method of education, which also includes the practice, meets these criticisms to some extent since, in this method, students are provided with the opportunity to "see the real world". Students will have the opportunity to make observations and study in the natural settlements of these materials (Küçükahmet, 2003). Particularly, the values and attitudes that occur in childhood and at a young age are very important in the development of empathy in nature relations in early ages and in the creation of love against nature. The formation of these means to show environmentally friendly behavior to protect the environment (De Haan, 1998).

When the results of the research were evaluated in general, no significant difference was found between the students who took and did not take the outdoor sports course (p = 0.693). It was observed that university students were not sufficient in terms of environmental sensitivity, environmental knowledge and environmental attitudes. In other words, the environmental education courses students received at university did not have a positive effect on their affective tendencies towards the environment. The inadequate environmental sensitivity of the university students, the environmental nature information and the superficiality of ecological culture can be shown as the main reasons for this. One of the important reasons for not having a significant difference between the students who took or did not take the outdoor sports course may be the fact that the joint courses in the mentioned university were offered theoretically. Although the education programs are rich in environmental knowledge, there are studies on the lack of application-oriented environmental regulations and the inadequacy of activities that integrate educational practices with nature (Delibaş & Babadoğan, 2009). In addition, the fact that the content is not adequately environmentalized, the curriculum and textbook contents are not organized in accordance with the objectives of environmental education, the inadequacy of teaching techniques in universities, valuing the theoretical memorization-based education rather than applied training be counted as other reasons.

As a consequence of the findings of the study, it can be said that the application of environmental-oriented courses, rather than mere theoretical knowledge, can be more useful in terms of environmental sensitivity and

environmental knowledge. In other words, in order to achieve a permanent change in behavior, students should be able to understand the environment by experiencing and practicing in the nature and away from classical education.

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