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THE ROLE OF PARENT'S PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS ON CHANGE IN EXERCISE LEVEL: A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON

ABSTRACT

The family, which is one of the smallest units of the society, has the most important effect on a child's life. It is known that parents are the initial examples for the child in many ways. This study primarily aims to compare the sports sciences students in Turkey and the United Kingdom in terms of their parents' participation in sports. The sample consisted of 390 sports sciences students (201 in the UK and 189 in Turkey). The study was conducted with the cross-sectional screening model. The data were collected by the Exercise Stages of Change Questionnaire (ESOCQ) and analysed by Chi-Squared (χ^2) test. Within the scope of the study, it was found that the sports sciences students in both countries were rather at the active stage of exercise stages of change in both countries, but the ratio of the students who actively participated in exercise in the UK was higher. The observations from the passive and preparation stages of the participation in exercises were examined and the frequency of the students in Turkey was higher compared to those in the UK. The rates of parent attendance in sports were also higher in the UK, and the active stage was on for the majority of these students from the exercise stages of change. In Turkey, the students whose parents do not attend sports have higher rates than those of the attending parents. In consideration of the sportive achievements, it is quite obvious that it is not enough simply to offer choices to children. Beyond that, another approach is required. The leading action to take can be participating in sports by themselves to become a model for their kids. Accordingly, it is essential that parents should be seen as a social support that may help them develop some new attitudes towards sports at their developmental ages.

Keywords: Parent role, parent support, sports participation, social support, adolescents, Turkey, the UK.

АНОТАЦІЯ

Дослідження спрямоване, перш за все, на порівняння участі студентів у фізичному вихованні та спорті у Туреччині та Великій Британії. Особливу увагу звернено на участь батьків студентів у спорті. Дослідження проводилося за участі 390 студентів, залучених до фізичного виховання та спорту (201 студент з Великої Британії та 189 студентів з Туреччини). Експеримент побудований на моделі перехресного скринінгу. У ході дослідження було з'ясовано, що студенти в обидвох країнах знаходяться на активній стадії фізичного навчання та виховання, але відсоток фізично активних студентів є вищим у Великій Британії. Були проаналізовані спостереження пасивного та підготовчого етапів участі у спортивній діяльності та встановлено, що кількість студентів з Туреччини на цих етапах є більшою у порівнянні з Великою Британією. Що стосується участі батьків у спорті, то їх кількість більша у Великій Британії. У Туреччині студентів, чий батьки не займаються спортом, більше, ніж тих, які займаються спортом. Що стосується спортивних



досягнень, то очевидним є той факт, що недостатньо просто надати дітям свободу вибору. Необхідно знайти інший підхід. Основним і найбільш дієвим є участь самих батьків у спортивній діяльності для того, щоб стати прикладом для наслідування для їхніх дітей. Відповідно, батьки мають надавати соціальну підтримку, яка може допомогти дітям розвинути нове ставлення до спорту на різних стадіях їх розвитку. У результаті аналізу даних дослідження було сформульовано деякі рекомендації щодо активізації участі батьків у спортивній діяльності та підвищення їх мотивації до занять спортом, зокрема практика дозволу державним працівникам, які займаються спортом, розпочинати робочий день на годину пізніше, ніж інші працівники.

Ключові слова: роль батьків, підтримка батьків, участь у спорті, соціальна підтримка, підлітки, Туреччина, Велика Британія.

INTRODUCTION

Parents try to support their children from several economic, psychological or emotional perspectives in their sports-related experiences and practices. With this support, they hope to contribute positively and permanently to their sports education and sportive lives (Martin, Jackson, Richardson, & Weiller, 1999; Welk, 1999). In addition to economic, psychological or emotional support related to the child's sports-related life, some parents knowingly or unknowingly play the role of a source of social support. This study discusses the participatory role of the parents in children's participation in sports.

The older people are, the less they have attention to improve their current well-being and more attention to preserve their existing health condition and capacities (Löckenhoff & Carstensen, 2004). As adults' ages are advancing, their participation in physical activities decreases (McPhee et al., 2016). Like it may be understood from this, it is highly important to adopt some sports-related habits at young ages. The report by the Department for Culture, Media and Sports similarly emphasised the importance of developing life-long sports-related habits among young people (Department for culture, 2012). The responsibilities of parents regarding the sports participation of children have been studied in a broad spectrum in different age groups starting with the preschool period (Abbot et al., 2016; Birchwood, Roberts, & Pollock, 2008; Hoyle & Leff, 1997; Laukkanen et al., 2018; Sallis et al., 1992; Trost, Kerr, Ward, & Pate, 2001). Some studies reported that children who received parent support take more pleasure from what they do, and active children usually have supportive families (Agata & Monyeki, 2018; Alemdağ, Alemdağ, & Özkara, 2016; Gustafson & Rhodes, 2006; Hein, 2015; Hoyle & Leff, 1997; Kremarik, 2000; Lijuan, Jiancui, & Suzhe, 2017). Considering all these studies, it is seen that they have emphasised the need for adopting sports-related habits at young ages and investigated this issue from different perspectives in relation to parents. Nevertheless, very few studies compared/contrasted different cultures on this topic.

If we consider the ranking at Olympic games as an indicator of sportive success, in the 120-year history of Olympics (1896 Athens – 2016 Rio), the United States has the first place with 2520 medals, and it is followed by Russia with 1865 medals, Germany with 1681 medals and the United Kingdom with 847 medals. Turkey is in the 32nd place in this ranking with 93 medals (IOC, 2018). Considering the sports statistics in Turkey, the ratio of individuals in the population at the age of 15 or older who participate in at least one branch of sports is 23.1 %, while those who do not participate constitute 76.9 % of the same population (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2008). These rates in the United Kingdom are as 61 % active, 14% fairly active and 26 % inactive (Audickas, 2017). According to the report of the



European Commission, the most physically active is the northern EU countries including Sweden (70 %), Denmark (68 %), Finland (66 %), the Netherlands (58 %), and Luxembourg (54 %), on the contrary to the southern ones with the lowest participation. It was also reported that there has been no significant change in these findings since 2009 (European Commission, 2014). Yüce and Hakan (2013) stated that active participation in sports in Turkey is on a very low level in comparison to some European countries. As the influence of the parents on the child is known, it was important for the target audience in the current study to investigate the sportive participation of parents in the UK and Turkey where noticeable differences in sports participation are observed. Nevertheless, Voss et al. (2014) emphasised that it is needed to determine the intercultural differences that determine the complexity of physical activity behaviours. Additionally, Özkara (2018) examined the physical activity environment in training and practice in Turkey and the EU and reported that there has been an insufficient number of studies in the fields of physical training and the sports in Turkey. Families may be examined as a socio-pedagogic problem area that may contribute to the improvement of the education system. This is why this study comparatively examined the family, which is a source of social support for children, in both countries. It was thought that comparing and contrasting different cultures would play a significant role in developing new strategies.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the exercise participation levels of sports sciences students in the UK and Turkey based on their parents' participation in sports.

Research Questions (RQ)

RQ1. Is there a significant difference between sports sciences students in the United Kingdom and Turkey based on their exercise participation levels?

RQ2. Do the exercise participation levels of sports sciences students in the United Kingdom and Turkey differ based on their parents' participation in sports?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a screening model. The statuses and characteristics of the sample were determined by the cross-sectioning approach (Karasar, 2012). The sample was selected by randomisation from among individuals who had common characteristics and experiences (Ekiz, 2009). The data were collected from students of sports sciences at Karadeniz Technical University (Turkey) and the University of Birmingham (the UK). The measurements were taken from different individuals/respondents approximately in the same time period and in compliance with the principles of cross-sectional screening (Figure 1) (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). The measurements were taken in the academic year of 2015–2016.

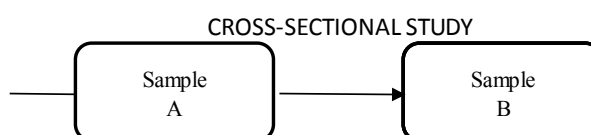


Fig. 1. A sample for developmental research. Reprinted from Research methods in education (p. 175), by L. Cohen, L. Manion & K. Morrison, 2000, London and New York, Routledge Falmer, Taylor & Francis Group



The data were collected by the method of surveying/questionnaire “that is especially frequently used for screening purposes” (Erkuş, 2009). The questionnaire was applied by two researchers in the UK and Turkey after obtaining written permissions.

Sample

The sample consisted of a total of 390 sports sciences students including 201 (102 female, 99 male) in the UK and 189 (84 female, 105 male) in Turkey.

Instrument

Exercise Stages of Change Questionnaire (ESOCQ). ESOCQ was developed by Marcus and Lewis (2003) to determine the stage of exercise behaviours of individuals. ESOCQ is a binary (yes/no) scale that consists of 4 items. Based on the responses, it classifies the respondents at five different stages through a scoring algorithm: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. According to Marcus and Lewis (2003), both pre-contemplators and contemplators are now inactive, however the latter may be active in the expected future. For physically active people, who are not at the acceptable levels are called preparers while who are at the acceptable levels are any individuals at the action stage lasting for up to six months, and then they transit to the maintenance stage. ESOCQ was translated from English to Turkish, and its psychometric properties were examined by Cengiz, Aşçı and İnce (2010). Using the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) the validity of the Turkish version of ESOCQ was tested. This scale categorises the physical activity levels of individuals as *low, moderate and high* (Craig et al., 2003). According to the results, it was found that the Turkish version of ESOCQ is a valid and reliable instrument in determining the stage of exercise behaviours of university students (Cengiz et al., 2010). In the present study, the Turkish university students were evaluated applying the ESOCQ (Turkish version). *Parent Participation in Sports* was determined by a question directed to the students as a single item.

Data Analysis

Frequency analysis was used to determine missing or incomplete items. Accordingly, as no such problems were observed, the analysis process was fed with all the data obtained. The data analysis was made using a statistical package program (SPSS, version 22.0) based on Chi-Squared (χ^2) test.

RESULTS

First of all, this study compared the exercise participation levels of sports sciences students in the UK and Turkey (RQ1). Frequency and percentage distributions were considered to make such a comparison. The results of χ^2 test based on three levels of exercise participation are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

The distribution (n, %) of exercise stages of change by country

Country	Exercise Stages of Change			Total
	Passive	Preparation	Active	
The UK	1 (0.5)	6 (3)	194 (96.5)	201 (100)
Turkey	51 (27)	40 (21.2)	98 (51.9)	189 (100)
Total	52 (13.3)	46 (11.8)	292 (74.9)	390 (100)

$$\chi^2 = 104.5, df = 2, p = .00$$



Considering the results of the χ^2 test related to the levels of exercise participation, the levels of active participation in exercise were high for both countries. Moreover, the ratios of the students who actively participated in exercise in the UK were higher. Considering the findings at the passive and preparation stages of exercise participants, the ratios of the students in Turkey were higher (Table 1). The measurements that were taken determined that this difference in the levels of exercise participation was significant, $\chi^2(2) = 104.5, p < .01$.

For RQ2, the exercise participation levels of the sports sciences students in both countries were investigated based on their parents' sports participation levels. The χ^2 test results on the exercise participation levels of the sports sciences students that differed based on their parents' exercise participation levels are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

The distribution (n, %) of exercise stages of change by parents' participation in sports in the two countries

Country	Exercise Stages of Change	Parent Participation in Sports		Total
		yes	no	
The UK	passive	1 (100)	0 (0)	1 (100)
	preparation	6 (100)	0 (0)	6 (100)
	active	175 (90.2)	19 (9.8)	194 (100)
Total		182 (90.5)	19 (9.5)	201 (100)
Turkey	passive	15 (29.4)	36 (70.6)	51 (100)
	preparation	21 (52.5)	19 (47.5)	40 (100)
	active	58 (59.2)	40 (40.8)	98 (100)
Total		94 (49.7)	95 (50.3)	189 (100)
Total	passive	16 (30.8)	36 (69.2)	52 (100)
	preparation	27 (58.7)	19 (41.3)	46 (100)
	active	233 (79.8)	59 (20.2)	292 (100)
Total		276 (70.8)	114 (29.2)	390 (100)

$$\chi^2 = 54.96, df = 2, p = .00$$

Considering the χ^2 test results regarding exercise participation levels, in both countries, it was observed that the students who had parents who participated in sports were mostly on the active stage of exercise participation. While the ratio of the students whose parents participated in sports in the UK was 90.5 %, this ratio was 49.7 % in Turkey. In Turkey, the ratio of the students whose parents did not participate in sports was higher than the ratio of those whose parents participated in sports (Table 2). The measurements that were taken determined that this difference in the levels of exercise participation by the parents was significant, $\chi^2(2) = 54.96, p < .01$.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering the importance of establishing life-long sports-related habits in young people, it is necessary to understand the sportive participation and its influencing factors. We aimed to make contributions to this issue by comparing different culture.

Regarding the first research question (RQ1), the ratio of the students in the UK who actively participated in exercise was much higher than that in Turkey (difference: ~45 %). The ratio of the participants at the passive stage of exercise participation was very low in the UK.



According to a report by the European Commission the ratio of participation in physical activity in the age group of 15–24 in EU countries is 74 % in men and 55 % in women. While ratios of participation in physical activity are usually high in EU member states (especially the northern part of the EU, including Sweden (70 %), Denmark (68 %), Finland (66 %), the Netherlands (58 %), and Luxembourg (54 %), these ratios are lower especially in the southern parts of the EU, representing the rates of 78 % in Bulgaria, 75 % in Malta, 64 % in Portugal, 60 % in Romania, and 60% in Italia for those who never take exercises or take part in sports, regardless of age (European Commission, 2014). Voss et al. (2014) conducted a study on children and adolescents and found that the British participants had higher physical activity (PA) scores in comparison to the Canadian participants (except for adolescence female PA scores). It is seen in these two developed countries that the PA scores of especially children were higher than medium values. A study that investigated the participation of students in university sports on German students of the 16–29 age group determined that approximately half of the students participated in university students, and they mentioned the importance of this issue.

Performing a survey, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) released the outcomes of physical education and sports participation that, in underdeveloped African countries, the numbers of sports teachers were inadequate based on the numbers of students, and class hours allocated for physical education mostly could not be followed due to various reasons (sports facilities, equipment, etc.) (Souchaud, 1995). It was also reported that the capacity of training sports teacher in developing countries was higher than that in underdeveloped African countries. This situation may be interpreted as that the parents, particularly in underdeveloped countries, have greater responsibility for their children's sportive participation and habitual adoption.

In a study on the physical activity levels among the Turkish university students, it was reported that who did not have vigorous physical activity was 72 %, who lacked moderate physical activity 68 %, and who had insufficient walking activity 1 %. Another study in Turkey also determined that the male students were superior to the female ones in physical activity levels (Aşçı, Tüzün, & Koca, 2006). The physical activity participation levels of young people in Turkey are neither as low as those in the underdeveloped African countries nor as high as those in the northern European countries. It may be stated that Turkey displays similar characteristics to those in the southern European countries in terms of participation in physical activity.

Another issue that was focused on by this study was the significance of the parental role in the participation in the sports-related and physical activities of sports sciences students. This study found the levels of exercise participation of students in both the UK and Turkey whose parents participated in sports to be higher, and a greater number of these students remained at the active stage out of the exercise stages of change.

It is seen that the studies in the literature emphasised the importance of social support and parental modelling alongside other factors (body composition, physical fitness, etc.) in relation to the participation of children or young people in sports. Students whose parents participate in sports have higher levels of exercise participation. Looking from this perspective, the relationship between the parent and the child in this study was similar to the findings in the literature.

In both countries, the majority of sports sciences students remained at the active step out of the exercise stages of change. Nevertheless, the ratios of the students who actively participated in exercise in the United Kingdom were higher. These students also



had much lower ratios of being on the passive and preparation steps of the exercise stages of change in comparison to the Turkish students. The exercise participation rates of the students whose parents participated in sports were higher in both the UK and Turkey. However, in the comparison of the two countries, the ratio of the parents' participation in sports was higher in the UK, and these students were mostly on the active step of the exercise stages of change.

It is very clear that, considering sports-related targeted outcomes, it is needed to adopt an approach that is beyond providing options for children. Setting an example for them by participating in sports in person may be the first attempt. This is why it would be reasonable to consider the parents as a source of social support in the young individual's adoption of a set of new behaviours related to sports in their developmental ages. Measures to be taken in relation to the participation of the parent in sports will be reflected positively not only on their own health but also their children in terms of being a role model. Accordingly, it may be stated that participation in sports to some extent is the responsibility of the parent in this regard. The sports participation rates of sports sciences students and their parents in Turkey are lower than those in the UK. Based on this finding, and in connection to the results of this study, it would be reasonable to take a set of precautions towards increasing the sports participation rates of parents especially in Turkey and motivating them in this issue. In relation to the topic, in the scope of the project "reçetemiz spor" [our prescription, sports] that was carried out in Edirne in Turkey, the Governor of Edirne stated that civil servants who take part in sports may start their working day one hour later (Economy news, 2015). Precautions that promote participation of employees in sports may be taken this way or in similar ways.

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