

# The relationship between the reasons for doing and not doing sports and sports awareness in university students: A cross-sectional study



Üniversite öğrencilerinde spor yapma-yapmama nedenleri ve spor farkındalığı arasındaki ilişki:  
Kesitsel bir araştırma

## Abstract

**Aim:** The aim of this study was to determine the level of sports awareness and reasons for university students doing or not doing sports, and to investigate the relationship between these two parameters.

**Methods:** The study included 479 university students from different provinces of Turkey, who were literate in Turkish. The sports habits of the students were evaluated using the Reasons for Doing and Not Doing Sports Questionnaire, and the level of sports awareness with the Sports Awareness Scale. All the data were collected online using a questionnaire created on Google Forms.

**Results:** The sport most frequently played by university students was determined to be volleyball (39.45%). The most common reason for not doing sport was physical reasons (1.35±1.23). The mean total score of the Sports Awareness Scale was 107.08±20.70. A statistically significant, weak positive correlation was determined between the subparameters of the Reasons for Doing Sport and all the subparameters of the Sports Awareness Scale, and with the exception of Insufficient Time, a statistically significant, weak negative correlation was determined between the subparameters of the Reasons for Not Doing Sport and the Sports Awareness Scale ( $p<0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** The study results demonstrated that the rates of university students doing sports were generally high. There is a need for further studies to develop awareness and increase sporting activities, and remove the limitations that can prevent participation in sports.

**Keywords:** Awareness; sports; students; universities

## Öz

**Amaç:** Çalışmada üniversitede okuyan genç bireylerin sportif aktiviteleri yapma-yapmama nedenleri, spor farkındalıklarının belirlenmesi ve bu iki parametre arasındaki ilişkinin araştırılması amaçlanmıştır.

**Yöntemler:** Çalışmaya farklı illerde üniversite öğrenimi gören, Türkçe okuyup-anlayabilen 479 öğrenci dahil edilmiştir. Bireylerin spor alışkanlıkları Spor Yapma ve Yapmama Nedenleri Ölçeği ile, spor farkındalıkları Spor Farkındalığı Ölçeği ile değerlendirildi. Araştırmanın verileri bir çevrimiçi anket formu (Google Form) ile toplanmıştır.

**Bulgular:** Üniversite öğrencilerinin en çok yaptığı spor türünün voleybol olduğu görüldü (%39,45). Spor yapmama nedenleri arasında en çok fiziki nedenlerin var olduğu olduğu saptandı (1,35±1,23). Spor Farkındalığı Ölçeği toplam skoru 107,08±20,70'di. Spor Yapma-Yapmama Nedenleri Ölçeğinin alt parametreleri ile Spor Farkındalığı Ölçeği'nin alt parametreleri arasında istatistiksel olarak düşük kuvvette anlamlı ilişki olduğu tespit edildi ( $p<0,05$ ). Ayrıca spor yapma alt ölçeği ile spor farkındalığı ölçeği arasında tüm parametrelerde pozitif yönde, zaman yetersizliği dışında spor yapmama alt ölçeği ile spor farkındalığı ölçeği arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı negatif yönde düşük kuvvette ilişkiler olduğu belirlendi ( $p<0,05$ ).

**Sonuç:** Üniversitede öğrenim gören öğrencilerin genel olarak spor yapma oranlarının yüksek olduğu görüldü. Sportif faaliyetlerin artırılması ve farkındalığın geliştirilmesine yönelik çalışmalarda, spor yapmaya engel olabilecek limitasyonların kaldırılması gerekliliği ortaya konuldu.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Farkındalık; öğrenciler; spor; üniversiteler

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## INTRODUCTION

Universities are institutions that not only provide scientific research and professional education, but as places with a greater young population, they are also institutions where social and sporting activities are commonplace as a means of society gaining healthy individuals.

Sport is defined as “the development of physical and mental health, as a basic component of economic, social, and cultural improvement, which is character-building and will provide development of personal characteristics, to increase the combative strength of the individual while overcoming feelings of excitement in a competition and competing within certain rules” (1). Through the mental and physical development of an individual, sporting activities have been found to contribute to personal development and socialization, thereby increasing working-life productivity. In the establishment of modern societies, it is aimed that every person at every level of society should have access to sports (2). However, as well as external factors such as time and space inadequacy in university students; Internal factors such as not liking physical activity, not knowing the effect of sports, laziness, or indifference are seen as obstacles to doing sports (3).

The increasing importance of sports in the modern world requires people to be informed about sports for the raising of a healthy generation. The negative effects on health, society, and the economy of the rapid spread of sedentary lifestyles throughout the world in recent years have increased the importance of sport. Sports awareness is an important social tool for society to be informed about all aspects of sports and learn desired behaviors through the activation of sports (4). For a healthy sports culture to be established in Turkey, for sports to become widespread in society, for society to be conscious of modern sports, and to be able to raise healthy future generations, there must first be sports awareness in all sections of society. Many studies in literature have emphasized the importance of these points (5,6). Upon reviewing the literature, it has been reported that the level of sports awareness among university students is influenced and could be associated with various parameters. In a study conducted by Eski et al. regarding university students, it was determined that sports awareness is correlated with factors such

as class level, sports experience, and family members' interest in sports (7). On the other hand, Koçyiğit et al. found that while sports awareness is not directly related to academic achievement, it is closely associated with entertainment-social intelligence among students (8).

Physical education and sports activities in secondary and further education are an important complement to academic education and have a very important function in developing the attitudes of individuals to sport (9,10). In recent years, in particular, there has been an intensification of studies to increase awareness by encouraging participation in sports and an active lifestyle (10,11). Sport is of great importance in developing all aspects of the health of young people. There are many different national and international studies in the literature that have focussed on physical activity and sports, predominantly on the attitudes to sports and physical activity while at university (12-14).

Taking the importance of sports and physical activity into consideration, fully understanding the limitations that can be a barrier is also thought to be important. In some studies, the reasons for doing and not doing sports were examined cross-sectionally; As far as we know, there is no study in the literature investigating the relationship between the reasons for not doing sports and sports awareness. The aim of this study was to determine the positive and negative factors in doing sports in university students studying in different departments and different cities, to determine sports awareness levels, and to investigate the relationships between these parameters.

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## MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study sample comprised 479 students studying in different departments of universities in the 2019-2023 academic years, selected according to the “convenience sampling” method at the beginning of the study (15). In the post hoc power analysis, the effect size was 0.16,  $\alpha$  error: 0.05, when 479 people were taken, 95% power was obtained. The study was completed with 479 students.

Approval for the study was granted by the Clinical Research Ethics Committee of Yozgat Bozok University (date: 21.07.2023, decision no: 2017-KAEK-

189\_2023.07.21\_05). All the study procedures were in compliance with the Helsinki Declaration.

University students aged 18-24 years, not being able to have a cognitive problem were included the study, and have any neurological or orthopedic disease, professional athletes and university graduates were excluded. All the students who met the inclusion criteria and were included in the study provided written informed consent. Our primary output was to determine the items that affect the university students' state of doing and not doing sports. Our secondary output is to determine the relationship between doing and not doing sports and sports awareness.

An online personal information form was created by the researchers to collect demographic data such as age, gender, height, weight, and body mass index (BMI) (kg/m<sup>2</sup>). Then the Reasons for Doing or Not Doing Sport Questionnaire and the Sports Awareness Scale were completed by all the students.

### Reasons for Doing or Not Doing Sport Questionnaire:

This 42-item scale was developed by Gülbahçe et al. The responses to the statements are given as Yes or No, in two independent sub-scales of Reasons for Doing Sport and Reasons for Not Doing Sport.

The Reasons for Doing Sport section has 16 items in 5 sub-dimensions of Belief in the Benefit of Sport, Effect on the Environment, Affected by the Environment, To Acquire a Social Network and the Influence of Those Close to Me. Higher points obtained in the sub-dimensions and the total score explain the reasons for doing sport.

The Reasons for Not Doing Sport section has 12 items in 4 sub-dimensions of Physical Reasons, Insufficient Time, Personal Reasons, and Financial and Social Reasons. Higher points obtained in the sub-dimensions and the total score explain the reasons for not doing sport (16).

### Sports Awareness Scale (SAS):

This scale consists of 30 items to determine sports awareness. Validity and reliability studies of the scale in Turkish were conducted by Uyar et al. in 2020 (4). The responses are given as 5-point Likert-type, from 1= I definitely disagree to 5= I definitely agree, to give a total

score in the range of 30-150 points. Higher points indicate a higher level of sports awareness and low points, a low level of awareness. The total scores are evaluated as 30-53 points: not aware at all, 54-77 points: not aware, 78-102 points: moderately aware, 103-126 points: aware, and 127-150 points: completely aware.

### Statistical Analysis

Data obtained in the study were analyzed statistically using SPSS 26 (IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 26.0, Chicago, USA). Descriptive statistics were stated as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation (SD), minimum and maximum values for quantitative data, and as number (n) and percentage (%) for categorical data. Conformity of the variables to normal distribution was assessed with histogram analysis, variation coefficients, skewness-kurtosis, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Normal Q-Q Plot, and Normal De-trended Q-Q Plot. In the evaluation of the relationships between the reasons for doing and not doing sport and the barriers to physical activity, Spearman's correlation coefficient (rho) was used. The strength of correlations was interpreted as r value >0.90: very high, 0.70-0.90: high, 0.40-0.70: moderate, 0.20-0.40: low, and <0.20: very low/in-significant. A value of p<0.05 was accepted as the level of statistical significance.

## RESULTS

The evaluation was made of a total of 479 university students, comprising 364 (74.9%) females and 115 (25.1%) males, with a mean age of 21.00 $\pm$ 0.65 years, and mean BMI of 22.32 $\pm$ 3.72 kg/m<sup>2</sup>. It was reported by 96.7% of the participants that they had one or more siblings living in the same home. Of the total students, 447 (93.31%) reported sporting activity and the age at starting sports was 14.51 $\pm$ 4.40 years.

It was reported that 315 people in Sports Activity at Primary School and Middle School and 225 people in Sporting Activity at University answered 'Yes'. In addition, it was reported that 237 people gave the answer "No" to the question "Do you know the locations of sports halls at the university" and 209 people answered "No" to the question of Knowledge of Sporting Activities at the University. The descriptive information of the university students is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive and demographic information of the study participants (n=479).

	n	%	
Paternal education level	Primary school	147	30.7
	Middle school	108	22.5
	High school	131	27.3
	University	87	18.2
	Post-graduate	6	1.3
Maternal education level	Primary school	235	49.1
	Middle school	113	23.6
	High school	89	18.6
	University	34	7.1
	Post-graduate	8	1.7
Family income level	Below minimum wage	47	9.8
	Minimum wage	171	35.7
	10.000-15.000 TL	142	29.6
	≥15000 TL	119	24.8
	500-1000 TL	208	43.4
Individual income level	1000-2000 TL	178	37.2
	2000-3000 TL	39	8.1
	≥3000 TL	54	11.3
	Once a week	69	14.4
	Twice a week	91	19
Frequency of doing sport at university	Three times a week	96	20
	Once a month	28	5.8
	Twice a month	17	3.5
	Three times a month	14	2.9
	Less frequently	164	34.2
Number of family members doing sports	1.00	230	48.0
	2.00	13	2.7
	3.00	29	6.1
	4.00	207	43.2

n: Number, %: percentage, TL: Turkish Lira

According to the Reasons for Doing and Not Doing Sports, the students who stated that they did sports were engaged regularly in primarily volleyball (39.45%) and at least one of aerobic exercise activities such as walking, running, cycling, or sports such as swimming, fitness, basketball, and football. It was determined that 32 (6.68%) students did not do any sport. The types of sports and percentages of students doing those sports are shown in Table 2.

The most common reason for doing sport was stated to be the Belief in the Benefit of Sport ( $2.38 \pm 0.98$ ),

and Physical Reasons ( $1.35 \pm 1.23$ ) were given most often by the students as the reason for not doing sport. From a possible total of 150 points, the mean score on the Sports Awareness Scale was determined to be  $107.08 \pm 20.70$ . The findings obtained from the Reasons for Doing and Not Doing Sports Questionnaire and the Sports Awareness Scale are shown in Table 3.

A significant negative relationship was determined between the age at starting sports and the Sports Awareness Scale ( $p=0.001$ ). A statistically significant positive relationship was determined between the

**Table 2.** Findings related to the type of sport performed (n=479).

Sport performed by the students	n	%
Volleyball	189	39.45
Fitness	71	14.82
Swimming	115	24.00
Aerobics	136	28.39
Basketball	70	14.61
Badminton	20	4.17
Pilates	34	7.09
Kick boxing	5	1.04
Football	82	17.11
Wrestling	11	2.29
Athletics	15	3.13
Tennis	81	16.91
Tae-kwondo	20	4.17
Not engaged in any sport	32	6.68

n: Number, %: Percentage

**Table 3.** The findings related to the Reasons for Doing and Not Doing Sports Questionnaire and the Sports Awareness Scale (n=479).

Parameter evaluated	Min-Max	Mean±SD	
<b>Reasons for doing sport</b>	Belief in the benefit of sport	0-4	2.38±0.98
	Effect on the environment	0-2	0.40±0.67
	Affected by the environment	0-4	1.11±1.19
	To acquire a social network	0-2	0.54±0.67
	Affected by close friends	0-4	1.89±1.08
	Total	0-16	6.33±3.29
<b>Reasons for not doing sport</b>	Physical reasons	0-4	1.35±1.23
	Insufficient time	0-2	1.31±0.82
	Personal reasons	0-3	0.34±0.69
	Financial and social reasons	0-3	0.50±0.77
	Total	0-12	3.51±2.49
<b>Sports Awareness Scale (SAS)</b>	30-150	107.08±20.70	

Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum, SD: Standard deviation

Sports Awareness Scale and the place of residence of the family, the number of people doing sport in the family, the status of doing sport at primary school, middle school, university, the frequency of doing sport at university, having knowledge of the sports facilities at university, and knowing the location of the sports halls ( $p<0.05$ ). Significant positive correlations were determined in all the subparameters of the reasons for doing sports, and a negative correlation was determined only in the Personal Reasons of the reasons for not doing sports ( $p<0.05$ ). The correlations between

the Sports Awareness Scale and the Reasons for Doing and Not Doing Sport Questionnaire are shown in Table 4.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study, which examined the relationship between the status of doing and not doing sports and the Sports Awareness Scale in university students showed that there was a significant positive relationship between the Sports Awareness Scale and all the

**Table 4.** Correlations between the Sports Awareness Scale and the Reasons for Doing and Not Doing Sport Questionnaire (n=479).

Reasons for doing and not doing sport	Sports Awareness Scale		
	r	P	
Age at starting sport	-0.151	0.001**	
Paternal education level	0.001	0.979	
Maternal education level	0.062	0.176	
Family income level	0.057	0.213	
Individual income level	0.019	0.674	
Place of residence of the family	0.093	0.042*	
Number of family members doing sports	0.126	0.006*	
Sports activity status at primary school and middle school	0.275	0.001**	
Sports activity status at university	0.276	0.001**	
Frequency of doing sports at university	-0.163	0.001**	
Having knowledge of the sports facilities at university	-0.208	0.001**	
Knowing the location of sports halls at university	-0.187	0.001**	
<b>Reasons for doing sport</b>	Belief in the benefit of sport	0.222	0.001**
	Effect on the environment	0.186	0.001**
	Affected by the environment	0.273	0.001**
	To acquire a socia network	0.175	0.001**
	Affected by close friends	0.316	0.001**
<b>Reasons for not doing sport</b>	Physical reasons	-0.118	0.009*
	Insufficient time	-0.043	0.347
	Personal reasons	-0.217	0.001**
	Financial and social reasons	-0.101	0.028

(\*):statistically significant difference ( $p < .05$ ), (\*\*):statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ )

n: Number, r: Spearman Correlation Coefficient

parameters of Reasons for Doing Sport, and a significant negative relationship between the Personal Reasons parameter of the Reasons for Not Doing Sports and the Sports Awareness Scale. Globally, the level of physical activity has been reported to be low (17).

Of the students included in this research, 53.2% reported that they did sport regularly. In other studies of university students, the rate of doing sports was reported to be 27.4% by Çelik et al., and 29.7% by Özdemir et al. (18,19). The sports performed by the current study students were primarily volleyball (39.45%) followed by aerobics (28.39%), and swimming (24%). In another study of university students, the sports most engaged in were seen to be football, followed by aerobics and step, then handball, volleyball, basketball, and table tennis (20). The results of the current study were found to be consistent with previous findings in the literature.

In literature, different reasons have been given for university students being inactive or not doing sports. A previous study stated the reasons given by university students for not being sufficiently physically active as primarily lack of time, followed by laziness and lack of facilities (20). In another study, lack of time was given as the first reason, negative environmental conditions as the second, and lessons as the third (18). Individuals who did not do sport emphasized in another study that they did not do sport because of an intense working tempo (21). It was also shown in another study that adolescents with a low socioeconomic level participated less in physical activities (22). In the current study, there was no relationship between socioeconomic level and not doing sport; physical reasons and insufficient time were given as the main reasons for not doing sport. Based on the awareness levels of the students in the evaluation of the total Sports Awareness Scale

score, it can be concluded that for the importance of sport and sporting activities to be adopted by university students, factors preventing their participation in sports should be removed and a physical environment should be provided.

Throughout the world, most studies in the literature on the subject of physical health and societal health have shown a negative effect of the inactivity of the young population. Studies of university students have emphasized that obesity has increased and a decrease has been observed in markers such as physical health and development, and the culture of being healthy (23,24). It has been shown to be important in the literature that a sports environment is established and materials are provided to be able to increase sporting awareness in schools (24,25). Demirtürk et al. highlighted that approximately only one in five university students had a sufficient level of physical activity in terms of health (26). In a study by Kasırğa et al. (2021), the physical activity levels were evaluated of 418 university students in health-related departments, and it was seen that the level of physical activity was not sufficient in 75.7% of the students (27). It was determined that the university students included in the study were 'aware' of sports awareness. The level of Sports Awareness in the current study was determined to be in parallel with that study. This may be because students in the 18-24 years age range have newly embarked on university life and although they have accumulated sufficient knowledge about being healthy, there may be other reasons for not doing sport. Taking parameters that constitute barriers to doing sports into consideration, the performing of sports can be encouraged by the referral of individuals to exercise, and by providing information and awareness to students in educational programs.

Sport, which has a positive effect on physical, mental, psychological, spiritual, and social development, makes significant contributions to eliminating stress and maintaining high motivation in healthy individuals. When the relationships between the reasons for doing and not doing sport and the sub-parameters of the Sports Awareness Scale were examined in the current study, there was determined to be a positive relationship between the place of residence of the family, the number of family members doing sport, and

having done sport in the period before university, and a negative correlation was found between the age at starting sport, doing sport at university, the frequency of doing sport at university, and the sports facilities at university. In other studies in literature, Özarslan also found a significant relationship between being physically active and regularly doing sport (28). In the current study, the family income level and the individual income level were not seen to affect Sports Awareness. Whether or not the individual has a good status in an economic sense is not a condition that will affect Sports Awareness. It is thought that individuals of all income levels can participate in sports.

. Keating et al. showed that the living environment of students affected physical activity (29). In another study, there was found to be a statistically significant difference between the activity levels of students who lived in or outside a provincial center (30). Personal characteristics, the place of residence, and sports facilities at the university were found to be important in the current study, in parallel with the findings of other studies in the literature.

The reasons for doing sport at university, including the belief in the benefit of sport, the effect on the environment, being affected by the environment, acquiring a social network, and the effect of close friends were seen to have a positive effect on Sports Awareness. Of the reasons for not doing sport, only personal characteristics were seen to have a negative effect on Sports Awareness. Few studies in the literature have investigated the status of doing and not doing sports, and these have shown that of the reasons for doing sport, most people do sport to stay fit and live healthily (21).

In a study by Var et al. (2018), it was reported that there was a higher rate of females doing sport than not doing sports, and their reasons were to stay fit and have a healthy appearance (31). Mamak et al. (2010) evaluated student-athletes and reported that participation in sports was supported at a high rate by the family associated with the socioeconomic structure and that for most of the student-athletes, somebody doing sport in the family or social environment played an important role in referring the individual to the sport (32). In a study by Tel et al., which examined the aims of faculty members doing sports, "the wish to protect my health" was seen to be at the forefront (33). In the

current study, the main reasons for doing sport were seen to be the belief in the benefit of sport, the effect on their close environment, and being affected by the environment. That the current study population was formed only of university students could explain the difference in the results from other findings in the literature.

The strengths of the study were the inclusion of university students studying in different provinces, the large sample group, and the evaluation of many parameters of sports habits. The limitations of the study were the lack of sub-analysis according to sports branches and the lack of comparison according to students studying in different departments.

It is important to the development of sports awareness, and the acquiring and reinforcing of regular sports habits should be provided with training given by the university. In this way, it will be easier to turn the negative attitudes of university students towards sports and physical activity can become positive or there will be the opportunity to reinforce positive attitudes with participation in sport. Moreover, we suggest that starting from the first years of education, to eliminate negative views of sports and for students to adopt a healthy lifestyle, the establishment of incentivizing, enjoyable activities will increase motivation to engage in sports.

### Conflict-of-interest and financial disclosure

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest to disclose. The authors also declare that they did not receive any financial support for the study.

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