



Original Article

The Relationship Between Secondary School Students' Happiness Levels in Physical Education Classes and Their School Satisfaction

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Abstract

As schools are the primary venues where children and adolescents engage in physical activity, they provide an appropriate context for examining the relationship between happiness levels and school satisfaction. Physical education classes, which support both physical and emotional development, occupy a pivotal position in this regard. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between secondary school students' happiness levels in physical education classes and their overall school satisfaction. The study was conducted using a survey model. A total of 367 secondary school students (226 males, 141 females) studying in Adıyaman province participated in this study, which was conducted in the 2024/2025 academic year. Data were collected using the Physical Education Class Happiness Level Scale and the Comprehensive School Satisfaction Scale for Children. The findings show that there is a significant positive correlation between happiness levels in physical education classes and school satisfaction. These results underscore the critical role of physical education in promoting emotional well-being and improving students' overall educational experiences. Future research should examine sociocultural factors, gender differences, and long-term outcomes associated with physical education and their impact on happiness and school satisfaction.

Keywords: Happiness, School satisfaction, Physical education.

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Introduction

The school environment is widely recognized as one of the most ideal settings for promoting physical activity among children and adolescents (Kriemler et al., 2011). Within this context, physical education classes play a vital role in fostering physical activity habits, developing motor skills, and encouraging the adoption of a healthy lifestyle among students (Yenal et al., 1999). Globally, the integration of physical education into educational curricula underscores its significance not only for its physical benefits but also for its contributions to students' social and emotional development (Siedentop, 2004).

Physical education classes offer structured and systematic teaching programs that not only enhance students' physical fitness but also instill a sense of sportsmanship and improve their self-efficacy (SHAPE America, 2020). Moreover, these classes facilitate social interaction among students, enabling them to spend enjoyable and meaningful time together (Uğraş & Serbes, 2019). Research on physical education consistently indicates that students find these classes enjoyable and perceive them as a source of happiness

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(Erhan & Tamer, 2009; Namlı et al., 2017; Temel & Güllü, 2016). Such positive emotions fostered through physical education can contribute to an individual's overall happiness.

Happiness is defined as the state in which individuals derive pleasure from life and feel a sense of well-being (Layard, 2011). Experiencing positive emotions (such as joy, excitement, and hope) more frequently than negative ones (such as anger, anxiety, and sadness) enhances life satisfaction and overall happiness (Eryılmaz, 2011). The literature widely acknowledges a strong relationship between regular participation in physical activities and higher levels of happiness (Lera-López et al., 2017). This relationship serves as a crucial starting point for examining the impact of physical education classes on students' happiness.

School satisfaction, on the other hand, refers to the cognitive and emotional evaluations that students make regarding their experiences within the school setting (Baker et al., 2003; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). Defined as the degree to which students enjoy their school experiences and feel good about them, school satisfaction is associated with improved academic performance, higher attendance rates, and enhanced psychological well-being, while also reducing the incidence of behavioral problems within the school environment (Huebner, 1994; Telef, 2014; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002; Zullig et al., 2011). The relationship between school satisfaction and students' overall happiness highlights the critical role of school experiences in shaping individual well-being.

As schools are the primary venues where children and adolescents engage in physical activity, they provide an appropriate context for examining the relationship between happiness levels and school satisfaction. Physical education classes, which support both physical and emotional development, occupy a pivotal position in this regard. This study aims to investigate the relationship between secondary school students' happiness levels in physical education classes and their overall school satisfaction.

Material and Methods

Research Design

This research aimed to examine the relationship between middle school students' happiness levels in physical education classes and their school satisfaction. The study was conducted using a survey model, which is an approach designed to describe an existing or past situation as it is (Karasar, 1998). Ethical approval has been obtained for the research, and since the participants are under the age of 18, both consent forms from the participants and parental consent forms have been signed.

Participants

The sample size for this study was calculated using the G*Power software (version 3.1.9.3, Germany). For this calculation, the "Exact" option was selected under the "Correlation: Bivariate normal model" statistical test, along with a two-tailed hypothesis test. The significance level for H1 was set at 0.02, with a Type I error rate (α) of 0.05 and a statistical power ($1-\beta$) of 0.95. Based on the analysis results, it was determined that a minimum of 319 participants would be required. In line with this, a total of 367 students studying in secondary schools in Adıyaman Province in the 2024/2025 academic year (226 males and 141 females) were included in the study. The participants were selected using the convenience sampling method, and their demographic characteristics were summarized using descriptive statistics and presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants.

Variable	Category	n	%	Age range (mean)
Gender	Male	226	61.6	-
	Female	141	38.4	-
Grade Level	5th Grade	80	21.8	10-11 (10.5)
	6th Grade	90	24.5	11-12 (11.5)
	7th Grade	95	25.9	12-13 (12.5)
	8th Grade	102	27.8	13-14 (13.5)

n: Sample number

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 367 participants included in the study. Among these, 226 participants (61.6%) were male, while 141 participants (38.4%) were female. The participants were distributed across the 5th to 8th grades, with the largest group in the 8th grade (27.8%) and the smallest in the 5th grade (21.8%). The age range corresponds to the typical ages of students in each grade, spanning from 10-11 years for 5th graders to 13-14 years for 8th graders.

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form

In order to determine the age, grade level and gender of the students participating in the study, a personal information form was prepared by the researchers.

Physical Education Lesson Happiness Level Scale

The Physical Education Lesson Happiness Level Scale (BEDMDS) developed by Uğraş and Serbes (2019) was used to determine the happiness levels in physical education and sports lessons. The scale is unidimensional and consists of 9 items. The scale items were scored as completely agree (5), agree (4), moderately agree (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1). The cronbach alpha value of the measurement tool was found to be .88. For this study, it was determined as 0.85.

Comprehensive School Satisfaction Scale for Children

The scale developed by Randolph et al. (2009) to determine children's school satisfaction was adapted to Turkish culture by Telef (2014). The scale is a unidimensional measurement tool consisting of 6 items. The scale is scored between 1 and 5 points and a score between 6 and 30 points can be obtained from the scale. As a result of the adaptation study, it was concluded that the scale explained 65% of the total variance. Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was .89 and the test-retest correlation value was .92. For this study, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.87.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in SPSS 23 Package Program. Descriptive statistics were used to find the frequencies and percentages of the data. Before analyzing the data, kurtosis and skewness values were checked (-2 to +2) for normality and it was determined that they showed normal distribution (Tabachnick et al., 2013). Therefore, Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to determine the correlation between the scales.

Results

In this section, the findings obtained from the research are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Pearson correlation analysis result of the relationship between physical education course happiness and school satisfaction.

Scales	n	r	p
Physical Education Course Happiness School Satisfaction	367	0,509	0,000**

n: Sample number; r: correlation; p: p-value; **: $p < 0.01$

According to Table 2, it is seen that there is a positive relationship between physical education course happiness and school satisfaction of the secondary students ($r = 0,675$, $p < 0,05$).

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between secondary school students' happiness levels regarding physical education classes and their school satisfaction. The findings revealed a positive correlation between students' happiness levels in physical education classes and their overall school satisfaction. This result suggests that students' interest in physical activity-related courses can enhance their satisfaction with their general school experience.

The literature indicates that physical activity positively affects adolescents not only in terms of physical well-being (Singh et al., 2012) but also psychologically, sociologically, and cognitively (Aberg et al., 2009; Ploughman, 2008). Furthermore, studies have reported that physical activity positively influences academic performance (Fedewa & Ahn, 2011; Singh et al., 2012). Within this context, the observed positive correlation between increased happiness levels in physical education classes—where physical activity is most prominently emphasized—and school satisfaction aligns with existing literature.

School satisfaction is defined as the outcome of students' subjective and cognitive evaluations of their experiences at school (Baker et al., 2003). This concept is generally associated with family, peers, self-perception, and the school environment (Huebner et al., 2001). Research indicates that teacher support and academic performance are the most significant predictors of school satisfaction (Hui & Sung, 2010). Moreover, students' cognitive assessments of school-related experiences, peers, and school environments are known to determine school satisfaction and, indirectly, their quality of life (Varela et al., 2018). The positive correlation identified in this study suggests that happiness levels regarding physical education classes could be a contributing factor to students' overall life satisfaction.

The findings also highlight the importance of considering socio-cultural and environmental factors that may influence this relationship. For instance, family attitudes toward physical activity or the availability of physical activity facilities in students' environments could play a significant role. Future research should explore these factors in more detail.

Additionally, gender and individual differences should not be overlooked in this context. Previous studies suggest that the psychological and social benefits of physical activity may differ by gender. Variables such as age and developmental stage should also be examined in greater depth.

From a long-term perspective, further research is needed to investigate whether happiness levels regarding physical education classes impact students' psychological resilience, academic success, and social relationships in adulthood.

This study has certain limitations. For instance, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases. Additionally, focusing solely on secondary school students may limit the generalizability of the findings to other age groups.

Finally, to improve the effectiveness of physical education classes, curriculum diversification, activities tailored to students' interests, professional development programs for physical education teachers, and the promotion of extracurricular physical activity programs should be prioritized.

Conclusions

This study revealed a positive relationship between secondary school students' happiness levels regarding physical education classes and their school satisfaction. The findings suggest that physical education classes represent an area that can enhance students' overall school satisfaction and contribute to their quality of life. Given the psychological and social benefits of physical activity, the importance of physical education classes is once again emphasized. Therefore, it is recommended to develop policies and programs that aim to increase access to and the effectiveness of physical education classes. Additionally, future research should explore the effects of happiness levels regarding physical education classes across different age groups and educational levels in greater detail.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding this study.

Data Availability Statement: Data supporting this study is available from the authors upon reasonable request.

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