

## Effect of the sport training on empathy ability of the vocational school students in Turkey

Dr. Korkmaz YİĞİTER<sup>1\*</sup> Lecturer. Pelin USTAOĞLU<sup>2</sup>

1. School of Physical Education and Sport, Duzce University, PO box 81620, Duzce, Turkey
2. School of Physical Education and Sport, Duzce University, PO box 81620, Duzce, Turkey

\*E-mail: korkmazyigiter@duzce.edu.tr

### Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of the sport training on empathy ability of the vocational school students in Turkey. The research population comprised of the vocational school for girls and 41 students in three class were taken as sample. All students in these classes participated in the study voluntarily. A total of 62 students were surveyed and 21 survey has been canceled owing to faults. As data collection tools, inquiry form and Empathic Ability Scale (EAS) were used to determine the demographic variables and scores of empathy ability of the participants respectively. The findings indicated that there was a significant statistically different between pre test and post test on empathy scores of participants ( $.0001, p < 0.05$ ). These findings were discussed in terms of empathy ability of the students and sport training in vocational school for girls in Turkey.

**Keywords:** Empathy, Sport training, Vocational school.

### 1. Introduction

Empathy is an important ability for people because if people understand each other in the social life, social communication networks can be more good for people. With this social communication networks, people can understand each other easily and understanding each other is an useful factor to create a new key for healthy relationships among people in the society. Empathy is also a quality and this quality enables a person to understand and feel concern for others situations or feelings. Empathy means to identify with the problems or situations of people and understand their thoughts and conditions. According to Freud empathy is being able to be same as the person in front of us and imitate him later. This mechanism helps the person to understand different ideas and worlds, having an idea about them (Kolayış & Yiğiter, 2010). An important aspect of the this ability is cognitive empathy, cognitive empathy typically encompasses or equates to cognitive perspective-taking skills and is generally described as the ability to imagine, with intention, the feelings and motivations of others (Eisenberg, 1991; Smith, 2006). With this interpretation, empathy is interpreted as role taking or perspective taking (Krebs & Russell, 1981; Underwood & Moore, 1982). Regardless of exactly how empathy is defined, the subjective experience of empathy is thought to make individuals more responsive to the feelings of others (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2004). In this context, empathy is not just the idea to understand others emotionally but also cognitively. As previously noted, empathy is an useful cognitive action to understand others' feelings and thoughts in the social life.

Consistent with the idea that empathy facilitates positive social relations in the social life, it can be said that empathy can provide to opportunities for players on understanding each other in the sport branches. From the perspective of athletes, empathy is an important component of the relationship among team players. Because understanding each other in the team is an important advantage on opponent of the team. With this advantage, every player can know how to play with team friends in the match and also even estimate the plan of the opponents regarding the match. When the players are able to demonstrate the empathy ability toward their opponents, the players can understand the strategy of the opponents. Maybe students can improve the empathy ability by participating in the sport training and increasing them in and out of the school life. According to the explanations, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of sport training on empathy ability of the vocational school students in Turkey. For that purpose, it was hypothesized that the sport training would have an important effect on the empathy ability of the vocational school students and would correlate with demographic variables in the study.

### 2. Method

#### 2.1. Participants

The research population comprised of the vocational school for girls and 41 students in three class were taken as sample. Vocational school for girls was randomly selected from one of the vocational schools for girls in the one city of Turkey. All students in these classes participated in the study voluntarily. A total of 62 students were surveyed and 21 survey has been canceled owing to faults. Descriptive statistics of participants' age can be seen on **table 1**.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of age

Category	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Age	41	15	17	16,31	,521

## 2.2. Instrument

### 2.2.1. Empathy Ability Scale (EAS)

Empathy Ability Scale was developed by Ustün Dökmen (1988) in Turkey. EAS has 6 items to scale the level of empathy ability of participants. Each of them has 12 questions regarding empathy ability level of the participants. The total scores can range from 62 to 219. Higher scores on all items and for the total EAS score represent positive appraisals of empathy ability in relation to participants (Yiğiter, 2008).

## 2.3. Procedure

An experimental design was used in the study. Empathy Ability Scale were administered to participants in before and after the the sport training. After administering the pre-test, the students in the vocational school for girls participated in the the sport training (12 weeks) which was conducted in two sessions each lasting two hours within a week. Participation in the study was voluntary and inquiry form, Empathy Ability Scale responses were anonymous. Consent from vocational school for girls was obtained for the research.

## 2.4. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by SPSS 16.0 Package Program. Descriptive statistics, paired sample t-test, pearson correlation test were used to analyze the data. Level of significance was determined to be 0.05.

## 3. Findings

Table 2. Demographic features of the participants

Category	N	%	
Department	Numerical	26	63,4
	Equally weighted	15	36,6
Income	Up to 500	9	22,2
	501-1000	19	33,3
	1001-1500	6	11,1
	1501-2000 and over	7	9,3
Mother's education	Illiterate	0	0
	Premary	6	14,6
	High	34	82,9
	University	1	2,4
Father's education	Illiterate	2	4,9
	Premary	13	31,7
	High	25	61
	University	1	2,4

According to descriptive statistics (**table 2**), number of participants were 26 (%63,4) in numerical and 15 (%36,6) in equally weighted departments. Monthly income was 500TL. for 9 (%22,2) participants, 501-1000TL. for 19 (%33,3) participants, 1001-1500TL. for 6 (%11,1) participants and 7 (%9,3) participants reported their monthly income to be between 1501-2000TL.

Table 3. Correlation among the variables

Category	Correlation		p
	r	EAS pre test scores	
Age	r	-,066	p>0.05
	p	,681	
Department	r	,035	p>0.05
	p	,828	
Income	r	-,375*	p<0.05
	p	,016	
Mother's education	r	,106	p>0.05
	p	,509	
Father's education	r	-,191	p>0.05
	p	,232	

As can be seen **table 3**, correlation analysis showed that EAS pre test was correlated significantly with income of the participants (.016, p<0.05) but was not correlated significantly with the other variables.

Table 4. Differences between pre test and post test in relation to participants

Participants	n	Empathy Ability Scores		p
		Pre test	Post test	
	41	138,64	144,39	,001 P<0.05

According to results of the pre and post test (**table 4**), there was a statistically significant difference between pre test and post test of EAS scores in the study (.001, p<0.05).

#### 4. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of the sport training on empathy ability of the vocational school students in Turkey. In this context, it was hypothesized that the the sport training would have an important effect on the empathy ability of the vocational school students and would correlate with demographic variables.

Considering the results of empathy scores, the results of the present study supported the hypothesis of this study that the sport training have an important effect on empathy ability of the vocational school students in the study (.001, p<0.05). Also, according to results of the study indicated that empathy ability is just correlated with the income in demographic variables in relation to the students (.016, p<0.05). In reviewing the literature, it can be said that there are researchs about empathy ability in Turkey and World but there is not any study in the literature in relation to correlation of the sport training with the empathy ability of the students. Therefore, this research can be classified as a pilot study as it used a small sample size. But some studies supported the initial hypothesis of this study, according to their results, empathy ability is not correlated with the some demographic variables in relation to participants. For example, empathy ability is not correlated with the age (Kolayış & Yiğiter, 2010; Çıtak, 1998; Taşdemir, 1999; Aydın, 1996; Uygun, 2006), also is not correlated with the parent education levels (Güçray, 2003) and does not differ with the person education levels (Lauder ve Reynolds, 2002; Yurttaş ve Yetkin, 2003; Pınar, 2004; Çiçek, 2006; Ercoşkun, 2005). Also, some researchers agreed with the idea that the empathy ability improved interpersonal relationships (Spiro, et. al, 1993; Nightingale, et. al, 1991; Olsen, 1996). In this context, the sport training can improve the empathy ability of students by improving the interpersonal relationships. Because team sport activities have a social aspect of interpersonal relationships.

Limitation of this study should be noted for future studies. Firstly, the present study was conducted in vocational school for girls in one city of Turkey and was representative for a small sample of vocational schools for girls. In this way, the present study used quasi-experimental design. In experimental studies, data is collected in before and after the measurements in the study. Experimental studies can bring forth trustable results for future studies. Therefore, it is recommended for future studies that a larger sample size be included to increase generalizability and reliability of the outcomes. Also, future studies should try to determine the differences between the experimental and control groups.

In the light of the explanations, the present study aimed to investigate the effect of the sport training on empathy ability of the vocational school students in the study. In conclusion, based on the data, the sport training have an important effect on empathy ability of the students and empathy ability was associated with income but was not associated with other variables. As a result, it can be said that sport training has positive effects on empathy ability of the vocational school students.

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