

# Investigating the Relationship Between Hopelessness and Assertiveness Conditions of the University Students in Turkey

Korkmaz YİĞİTER  
University of Duzce, PO box 81620, Duzce, Turkiye

## Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between hopelessness and assertiveness conditions of the university students. A total of 214 student ages  $19.59 \pm 1.39$  from different department of the university participated in the study. Beck Depression Inventory and Rathus Assertiveness Schedule were used to determine the participants' scores of depression and assertiveness respectively. T test was used to compare the data in terms of gender and also, Pearson correlation test was used to determine the correlations of the variables. Level of significance was set at 0.05. There was not a significant difference between assertiveness and hopelessness scores of male and female university students. In contrast with this result, there was a significant relationship between assertiveness and hopelessness levels of the students. Result of the study highlights the level of hopelessness is effective feature on the assertiveness level of the university students.

**Keywords:** Hopelessness, psychology, assertiveness, university students.

## 1. Introduction

Hopelessness is very effective on the happiness or unhappiness of the people in the daily life. Therefore, it must be investigated to decrease the negative results of the effects. Many clinical investigators believe that hopelessness is simply a diffuse feeling state and consequently too vague and amorphous for quantification and systematic study. However, it has been argued that a person's hopelessness can be objectified by defining it in terms of a system of negative expectancies concerning himself and his future life (Beck et al., 1974). As people experiencing feelings of hopelessness and despair become increasingly affected, their thoughts tend to become even more negative (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989; Yigiter, 2014). The next stage of hopelessness may be depression. Depression is a mental disorder that affects people on motivational, emotional, cognitive, somatic, and motor levels (Gerber et al., 2012; Yigiter, 2014).

These psychological conditions result in some negative behaviours. For instance, the association between suicidal ideation and psychopathological constructs such as depressive symptoms and hopelessness have been addressed extensively (Beck et al., 1993; Kuo et al., 2004; Jenny et al., 2015). Although the presences of these psychopathological constructs are strong predictors of suicidality, it should not be overlooked that some individuals deal with their hardship in a positive way. The positive elements that motivate people to adopt coping strategies instead of suicidal behaviour in the face of adversity, like any other content associated with a decrease in suicide (Niederkrötenhaler et al., 2010; Jenny et al., 2015). Hopelessness causes impaired thinking and leads a person to have low expectations. There are a number of characteristics that can clue one into the fact that a person is experiencing hopelessness such as: social withdrawal, psychological discomfort, feelings of incompetence and being overwhelmed (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995). Also, hopelessness causes impaired thinking and leads a person to have low expectations. There are a number of characteristics that can clue one into the fact that a person is experiencing hopelessness such as: social withdrawal, psychological discomfort, feelings of incompetence and being overwhelmed (Andrea, 2007; Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995). In the long run hopelessness has been shown to be detrimental in a number of ways. Hopelessness is a direct link to mental illness, depression and suicidal ideation (Andrea, 2007; Beck, Kovacs, & Weissman, 1975). Assertiveness, another parameter for psychological welfare is an important feature needed by people to protect their rights in the daily live. Being assertive means being positive for now and future. Therefore, it should be improved by various ways at the childhood period.

Consequently, hopelessness is conceptualized as an individual's negative expectancy regarding the future and it is characterized by negative emotions, pessimistic expectations, and loss of pleasure in life (Marsigila et al., 2011). So, hopelessness may cause many serious effects on the people's general health physiologically and psychologically. Therefore, the real questions we need to solve are that how can we decrease the hopelessness level and how we can increase assertiveness level of people? In the literature, it is pointed out that sport participation is effective both on the physiological and on the psychological conditions in many positive ways. In this context, it is investigated in the study that hopelessness condition would correlate with the assertiveness feature of the university students.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

Prior to beginning the study, a total of 214 university students ages  $19.59 \pm 1.39$  were recruited from different

programs of a university in Turkey. All participants participated in the study voluntarily. Beck Depression Inventory and Rathus Assertiveness Schedule were used to determine the participants' scores of depression and assertiveness respectively. All participants were informed about the voluntary participation, confidential, process and conditions related to study. Also, it is explained that they could withdraw at any stage without any conflict, if they want to give up.

### 2.2. Data Collection Tool

*Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)*: The BDI is a 21-question multiple-choice self-report inventory developed by Beck (1961) for determining the severity of depression. When the test is scored, a value of 0 to 3 is assigned for each answer and the total score is compared to determine the depression's severity. BDI scores range from 0 to 63. Scores between 0 and 9 indicate minimal depression; scores between 10 and 18 indicate mild depression; scores between 19 and 29 indicate moderate depression; and scores between 30 and 63 indicate severe depression. Test-retest reliability ranges from 0.86 to 0.93 (Gordon, 1988), and a coefficient alpha of 0.87 has been reported in the study of Beck et al. (1988). The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) was adapted to Turkish by Hisli (1989) and reported that (BDI) Cronbach alpha coefficients were found to be 0.80 for the Turkish version (Yigiter, 2017).

### 2.3. Data Analysis

All participants in the study were assigned code numbers for data entry and analysis. ID codes were given to participants to match the first and second tests. The data were analyzed using SPSS 16.0 Package Program. Descriptive statistic was used to determine average of the age regarding participants. Also, t test and pearson correlation test were implemented to determine differences between male and female and correlations between all parameters respectively. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

## 3. Results

Table 1 Descriptive results of the participants

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Sd. Deviation
Age	214	18,00	24,00	19,59	1,39
Hopelessness	214	1,00	13,00	4,44	3,19
Assertiveness	214	11,00	28,00	21,32	5,32

As shown in Table 1, average of the ages was found to be  $19,59 \pm 1,39$  and average of the hopelessness score was found to be  $4,44 \pm 3,19$  and average of the assertiveness score was found  $21,32 \pm 5,32$ .

Table 2 Differences between male and female students

		N	Mean	Std.Deviation		
Hopelessness	Female	36	4,27	3,282	,915	>0.005
	Male	178	4,47	3,185		
Assertiveness	Female	36	20,27	4,832	,67	>0.005
	Male	178	21,53	5,404		

As shown in Table 2, there was not a statistically significant difference between hopelessness score of the female and male participants in the study ( $>0.005$ ), and no statistically significant difference was found between the assertiveness score of the female and male participants in the study ( $>0.005$ ).

**Table 3 Relationships between hopelessness and assertiveness**

		Correlations					
		Age	Gender	Illness	Previous Live	Hopelessness	Assertiveness
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	-,042	-,273**	-,021	,092	-,003
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,545	,000	,765	,179	,964
	N	214	214	214	214	214	214
Gender	Pearson Correlation	-,042	1	,103	,371**	,023	,088
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,545		,131	,000	,733	,197
	N	214	214	214	214	214	214
Illness	Pearson Correlation	-,273**	,103	1	,055	-,104	,085
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,131		,423	,131	,215
	N	214	214	214	214	214	214
Previous Live	Pearson Correlation	-,021	,371**	,055	1	,311**	-,225**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,765	,000	,423		,000	,001
	N	214	214	214	214	214	214
Hopelessness	Pearson Correlation	,092	,023	-,104	,311**	1	-,598**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,179	,733	,131	,000		,000
	N	214	214	214	214	214	214
Assertiveness	Pearson Correlation	-,003	,088	,085	-,225**	-,598**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,964	,197	,215	,001	,000	
	N	214	214	214	214	214	214

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 3, there was not a statistically significant relationship between hopelessness and some parameters such as illness, gender. Whereas there was a significant relationship between hopelessness and assertiveness and previous live of the participants (<0.005).

#### 4. Discussion

The objective of this study was to investigate and evaluate the relationship between hopelessness and assertiveness conditions of the university students. In this perspective, similar studies in the literature were compared to results of the present study. Many parameters are related to hopelessness such as depression, anxiety and stress etc. The result of the research showed that no a statistically significant relationship between hopelessness and some parameters such as illness, gender. Whereas it was found a significant relationship between hopelessness and assertiveness and previous live of the participants

It is mentioned before that high hopelessness level influence the mood condition of the people in negative direction. Therefore, we need to figure some problem out that how can we decrease the level of hopelessness and increase the assertiveness level of the people? Some researcher suggested that positive thinking is effective in decreasing the level of hopelessness level. Rory et al., (2004) investigated the relationship between positive thinking and hopelessness. Results of their study pointed out that positive expectations buffer the relationship between stress and hopelessness. Individuals who perceive high levels of stress but who can think of positive future events report lower levels of hopelessness compared to similarly stressed individuals reporting fewer positive future thoughts. Also, sport participation is other effective activity to decrease level of the hopelessness. Kirkcaldy et al., (2002) deduced that physically active people protect themselves against depressive and self-debilitating thoughts. Sport participation has been shown to have a positive effect in reducing individuals' levels of hopelessness (Page & Tucker, 1994; Caver, 2012; Yigiter, 2014). Teychenne (2008) showed in his research that although the dose and domain of physical activity varied across studies reviewed, low or high doses physical activities may be protective against depression. With respect to assertiveness considerations, the recreational physical activities can provide many benefits properties with similar characteristics of assertiveness (Yigiter, 2013). Sport Education was shown to be a useful instructional model for improving a variable (assertiveness) directly related to personal and social responsibility (Garcia and Gutierrez, 2013). Using a variety of techniques, including arts and crafts, animals, sports, games, dance and movement, drama, music, community outings, recreation therapists treat and maintain the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of their clients. (Shapiro, Sayers, 2003; Tremayne, 2011; Yigiter, 2013). Several limitations should be explained in this part regarding the present study. This research has a small sample size but results are important being as a sample research in terms of future researches. To develop reliabilities regarding study results, number of participants could be enlarged by the future researchers. In the study, university students were took part in the research voluntarily but for the future research different departments could be used such as elementary school, high school. It is mentioned above that physical activities, recreational activities or sport participation contributed to decrease hopelessness level and increase the assertiveness and have positive effects on psychological well-being and many parameters related to it. This study have shown that low hopelessness level is very effective in increasing assertiveness level of the university students. In this way, some programs can be developed for improving many aspects of psychological

well-being such as assertiveness, anxiety, hopelessness, and depression etc.

## 5. References

- Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, (1989). Hopelessness Depression: A Theory-Based Subtype of Depression. *Psychological Review* . 3,31. 358-372. DOI: 10.1037/0033-295X.96.2.358
- Andrea K. McCarter (2007) The Impact of Hopelessness and Hope on the Social Work Profession, *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 15:4, 107-123, DOI: 10.1300/J137v15n04\_07
- Beck AT. (1961). An inventory for measuring depression. *Archives of general psychiatry*. 4: 561-571
- Beck, A., Weissman, A., Lester, D., & Trexler, L. (1974). The measurement of pessimism: The Hopelessness Scale. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 861-865. <http://doi.org/gsf>
- Beck, A.T., Kovacs, M., & Weissman, A. (1975). Hopelessness and suicidal behavior. *Journal of American Medical Association*, 234(11), 1146-1149.
- Beck A, Steer R, Gar BM. (1988). Psychometric properties of the Beck Depression Inventory: Twenty-five years of evaluation. *Clinical Psychology Review*. 8: 77-100.
- Beck AT, Steer RA, Beck JS, Newman CF. (1993). Hopelessness, depression, suicidal ideation, and clinical diagnosis of depression. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*. 23: 139-145.
- Caver, C. (2012). A qualitative study of hopelessness and homelessness among African-American male ex-offenders. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of the Rockies, CO, USA.
- Farran, K.A., Herth, J., & Popovich, M. (1995). *Hope and Hopelessness: Critical Clinical Constructs*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gerber, M., Kalak, N., Lemola, S., Clough P. J., Perry, J. L., Pühse, U., ... & Brand, S. (2012). Are adolescents with high mental toughness levels more resilient against stress? *Stress and Health*, 29, 164-171. <http://doi.org/tth>
- Gordon V, Matwychuck A, Sachs E, Canedy B. A 3-year follow-up of a cognitive behavioral therapy intervention (1988). *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*. 2:218-226.
- Hisli N. (1989). Beck Depresyon Envanterinin Universite Ogrencileri icin Gecerligi ve Guvenirligi. *Journal of Psychology*. 7:3-13.
- Jenny M. Y. Huen, Brian Y. T. Ip, Samuel M. Y. Ho, and Paul S. F. Yip (2015). Hope and Hopelessness: The Role of Hope in Buffering the Impact of Hopelessness on Suicidal Ideation. *Plos One*, 10(6).
- Kirkcaldy, B., Shephard, R., & Siefen, R. (2002). The relationship between physical activity and self-image and problem behaviour among adolescents. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 37, 544-550. <http://doi.org/dft7j5>
- Kuo WH, Gallo JJ, Eaton WW. (2004). Hopelessness, depression, substance disorder, and suicidality: A 13-year community-based study. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*.;39: 497-501. [PubMed].
- L.M. García-López & D. Gutiérrez (2015). The effects of a sport education season on empathy and assertiveness. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 20:1, 1-16, DOI: 10.1080/17408989.2013.780592
- Marsigila, F. F., Kulis, S., Perez, H. G., & Parsai, M. (2011). Hopelessness, Family Stress, and Depression among Mexicanheritage. 36(1), 7-18.
- Niederkröthaler T, Voracek M, Herberth A, Till B, Strauss M, Etzersdorfer E, et al. (2010). Role of media reports in completed and prevented suicide: Werther v. Papageno effects. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*. 197: 234-243. doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.109.074633 [PubMed]
- Page, R. M., & Tucker, L. A. (1994). Psychosocial discomfort and exercise frequency: An epidemiological study of adolescents. *Adolescence*, 29, 193-191.
- Rory O'Connor, Daryl O'Connor, Susan O'Connor, Jonathan Smallwood & Jeremy Miles (2004). Hopelessness, stress, and perfectionism: The moderating effects of future thinking, *Cognition and Emotion*, 18:8, 1099-1120, DOI: 10.1080/02699930441000067
- Shapiro D.R, Sayers K.L, (2003). Who does what on the interdisciplinary team: regarding physical education for students with disabilities? *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 35(6), 32-38
- Tremayne T. (2011). *Therapeutic recreation activity guide: A guide instructing professionals and parents of individuals with disabilities on the use of visual supports in the implementation of social recreation activities*. Master' Thesis. Recreation and Leisure Studies. California; California State University.
- Yigiter K., (2013). Improving the assertiveness of nursing students by participating in the recreational physical activities. *International Journal of Sport Studies*, 3(3): 258-262.
- Yigiter, K. (2014). The effects of participation in regular exercise on self-esteem and hopelessness of female university students. *Social Behavior and Personality: An international journal*, 42, 1233-1244. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2014.42.8.1233>
- Yigiter, K. (2017). Decreasing Depression By Improving The Level Of Self-Esteem In A Tennis Training Program For Female University Students. *ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry*, 18 (1), 61-70.