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## **The Relationship of Peer Relations of University Students with Several Factors**

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### **Abstract**

It is only possible through positive relationships between communicating individuals in social and education life to experience a high level information sharing and cooperation. It is known that the level of such an interaction among peer groups will be higher than that seen among other individual groups. Objective of the present study was to determine the variables which can affect the level of peer relations among university students and the effect levels of peer relations in education process and social life. It was found from the results that there is a significant difference between mean scores of the subscales of peer relations when considered the variables of gender, individual monthly income, family structure, performing sportive activities, time spent on sport weekly and the reason for performing sportive activities. No significant difference was found between the groups for the types of sportive activities. The level of peer relation among the students performing sportive activities was found to be higher than those who are not engaged in any kinds of sport activities.

**Keywords:** Peer, Peer Relations, Relationship Between, Sport and Peer Relation

## Introduction

Since the inception of human life on the earth, people have tended to be in need of living together with others and started to live in the form of communities. Human gregariousness is accepted to be a requirement resulting from the fact that humans are social creatures. From the moment when an infant first sees the light of day, it begins to live in a family, which is the smallest unit of community and thus starting the first social interaction with parents (Arı, 2005).

Effects of the social interaction process with parents which begins immediately after birth can sustain throughout human life, however; most of the behaviours such a process can affect are seen markedly in early childhood period. Interactions between child and parents, siblings and peers are vitally important in this period (Gander and Gardiner, 2001; 297). Peer relations which can play an important role in the socialization of a child may have short and long-term effects on nearly all development areas of children especially in the first years of life.

It is very important for peers to be a model, guide and an information source for each other, at equal status and share their experience, in the determination of either the quality or the effects of peer relations. Even though they start in the first years of life, e.g. preschool education period, under today's conditions, peer relations exhibit a structure getting complicated in whole childhood period. Functions of peer relations may vary depending on an individual's age, but their importance does not decrease in human life since they can result in significant permanent effects in individual's versatile development (Gülay, 2008; p.24).

It can clearly be seen when peer relations are considered closely that they may have different qualities at different ages. For instance, in childhood period, peer relations may gain their shapes from the social environment a child take place (school or classroom rules etc.), individual skills of other people (e.g. social skills) and children's interactions (Song, 2006, Akt:Gülay, 2009; 82-93).

Youths begin to spend more time with their peers than their family in the passage period from childhood to adulthood, i.e. adolescence and think their peers can better understand them than their family. They see themselves to be a natural member of such peer group and spend efforts to resemble other members. Social needs such as acceptance, social approval and loyalty are densely experienced by youths in peer groups they feel belonging in adolescence period. (<http://www.anabilim.k12.tr/>)

Friend groups are important for youths in adolescence period to help gain ethics norms and values and contribute to the development of relation construction skills through the feedbacks in groups. In addition, youths can experience rejection when they come into conflicts with their groups while they reconsider themselves by gaining insight when they receive confirmation from the groups.

Friend groups are accepted by youths to be the environments where rapid socialisation is experienced among adolescents, feelings such as loyalty, courage, participation and sharing develop and thoughts, attitudes and judgements can be expressed freely. Besides, youths can acquire self-confidence, social status and social approval as well as learn the sexual roles in such friend groups (Kemple 1991, Hartup and Stevens 1997, Akt: Döğücü, 2004). In this period, youths load their peers too much emphasis and are largely affected by them. They spend most of their time with their friends and try to move away from their stress related to life by getting their supports. Peer relations at this age are not only a requirement but also a

social support source which cannot be received from family (Çırpan and Çınar, 2013).

Except for extreme examples, a normal individual leading a life in a social environment from the birth always prefers living with other people. Even if there may sometimes be limits, it is human's natural characteristics to share the same house and social environment with others. In the same way, sports is also a social interaction tool. During the performance of sportive activities at different levels, individuals can find themselves in different social interactions at each of these levels (Karagözoğlu, 2005; 23).

Each type of sportive activities is a social experience. Individuals attending sportive events can find opportunities for the expression of their feelings through games and movements. Such activities can help individuals get rid of and control some harmful feelings such as aggression, shyness and jealousy. It is only possible through the participation in sportive activities and events to spend energy under pressure. Sportive activities can contribute not only to physical but also social development and improvement of individuals. It is a fact that sports has an important role in individuals' socialisation since it is a social activity which makes them participate in dynamic social environments (Öztürk, 2007).

One of the most important functions of sports is that it can motivate and develop individuals' sense of belonging to a group. Sense of belonging accepted to be one of the important values in the socialisation process of human a social creature. Sense of belonging to a group such as a family, team or nation is seen to be an important factor in the determination of the role an individual undertakes in society and gaining a certain status. Individualistic or group success in sports may cause the continuation of such senses and help individuals' socialisation (Nirun & Özönder, 1990).

Through the participation in either individualistic or group sportive games (e.g. as a member of a team) individuals can acquire the skills of socialisation, cooperation, collaboration, respecting for other group members and game rules and making desired and healthy relations with their peers.

Because it is thought that sports is an important tool for the socialisation of individuals and their construction of healthy relations with their peers, this study deals with the relations of university students performing sportive activities with their peers considering variables at different levels.

## Materials and Method

Peer Relations Scale was used to be a data collecting tool. In addition, questions involving the gender, age, income, family structure and performance of sportive activities took also place.

Peer Relations Scale was revised by evaluating the structure of the concept in question and supporting the structure of measurement tool composed of 30 items and 6 factors via experimental studies. After the revision, measurement tool was composed of 5 factors and 23 items, i.e. subdivisions of togetherness (involving 4 items), conflict (involving 4 items), assistance (involving 5 items), protection (involving 5 items) and closeness (involving 5 items) Scale is arranged according to 5 – item Likert type rating ranging from 1 (not true) to 5 (absolutely true). Participants of the study were asked to think carefully about each item and give their answers for each item by considering their closest friends when rating their friendship. Scale can be evaluated on both dimensional basis and by taking total scores into consideration. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was applied in order to test the structure validity of the scale and a 5-factor structure was supported ( $\chi^2/df=19.83/12$ ,  $p=.08$ , NNFI=.98). Internal consistency coefficients of the subscales of Peer Relations Scale were found to vary from 0.71

to 0.86 (Bukowski et al., 1994). Scores of whole scale or its subscales are calculated using the arithmetic means of the answers given for the related items. Increase in the scores taken from measurement tool can refer to the increase in the quality of peer relations.

## Results

This part of the study presents the results of the study and comments on these results. Table 1 represents the demographic characteristics of the students while Table 2 shows the frequency distribution of their performance of sportive activities. Independent sample t test was used to make a comparison between the values obtained from the subscales of peer relations and the variables of gender, performance of sportive activity and type of the sportive activity and statistical results are given in Table 3,6 and 7. One way ANOVA analysis test was used to compare the values obtained from the subscales of peer relations with the variables of monthly income, family structure and the reason of sportive activity performance and the statistical results are given in Table4,5 and 8.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics	Variable	N	%
Gender	Female	159	48.8
	Male	167	51.2
	Total	326	100.0
Age	19 and below	15	4.6
	20-23	256	78.5
	24 and above	55	16.9
Individual monthly income	300 TL and below	133	40.8
	301 TL – 500 TL	84	25.8
	501 TL – 700 TL	30	9.2
	701 TL and above	79	24.2
Family structure	Nuclear family	264	81.0
	Extended family	56	17.2
	Broken family	6	1.8

**Table 2.** Sportive activity performance

Sportive activity performance	Variable	N	%
Do you perform a sportive activity?	Yes	191	58.6
	No	135	41.4
	Total	326	100.0
Sports type	Collective sports	96	29.4
	Individualistic sports	95	29.1
	None	135	41.4
Weekly time spent for sportive activities	1 h and less	24	7.4
	2 – 4 h	60	18.4
	5 – 7 h	37	11.3
	8 h and more	70	21.5
	Never	135	41.4
Reason for the performance of sportive activities	A good physical appearance	10	3.1
	For wellness	67	20.6
	Mental and physical recreation	114	35.0
	Not performing a sportive activity	135	41.4

**Table 3.** t values of differences in the mean scores students were given for subscales of peer relations and standard deviations

Levels of peer relations	Gender	N	X	SD	t	p
Togetherness	Female	159	11.97	3.85	1.302	.194
	Male	167	11.43	3.68		
Conflict	Female	159	8.34	3.61	-2.813	.005
	Male	167	9.46	3.58		
Assistance	Female	159	20.28	5.25	3.353	.001
	Male	167	18.34	5.19		
Protection	Female	159	15.27	4.24	3.029	.003
	Male	167	13.90	3.89		
Closeness	Female	159	19.46	5.14	3.244	.001
	Male	167	17.64	5.014		

It can be seen from the table that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of subscales of conflict, assistance, protection and closeness at the significance level of P0.05 while no significant difference was determined for togetherness. Females received higher mean scores in assistance, protection and closeness than males, but lower scores in conflict.

**Table 4.** Mean scores and standard deviations the students at different income levels received

Levels of peer relations	Individual monthly income	N	X	SD	F	P	
Togetherness	300 and below	133	11.09	3.26	2.339	.011	1<4
	301-500	84	11.91	3.72			
	501-700	30	11.76	4.62			
	701 and above	79	12.45	4.15			
	Total	326	11.69	3.77			
Conflict	300 and below	133	8.30	3.22	3.253	.038	1<2.3
	301-500	84	9.34	3.62			
	501-700	30	10.33	4.80			
	701 and above	79	8.97	3.64			
	Total	326	8.92	3.63			
Assistance	300 and below	133	19.39	5.28	.259	.855	-
	301-500	84	19.19	5.50			
	501-700	30	18.56	5.16			
	701 and above	79	19.51	5.26			
	Total	326	19.29	5.30			
Protection	300 and below	133	14.74	4.25	.604	.613	-
	301-500	84	14.05	4.09			
	501-700	30	14.93	4.16			
	701 and above	79	14.68	3.94			
	Total	326	14.57	4.12			
Closeness	300 and below	133	18.60	4.99	.634	.594	-
	301-500	84	18.00	5.53			
	501-700	30	18.23	5.75			
	701 and above	79	19.07	4.77			
	Total	326	18.53	5.15			

It can be stated when considered the table that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of students at different income levels in assistance, protection and closeness at the significance level of P: 0.05 while significant differences were determined for

togetherness and conflict.

Mean scores of togetherness subscale were found to be lower in the student group with a monthly income of 300 TL and below than in the group with 701TL and above while the mean scores given for conflict were also lower in the group with a monthly income of 300 TL and above than those with monthly income of 301-500 TL and 501-700 TL.

**Table 5.** Mean scores and standard deviations the students in different family structures received

Levels of peer relations	Family structure	N	X	SD	F	P	
<b>Togetherness</b>	Nuclear family	264	11.68	3.77	.202	.817	-
	Extended family	56	11.66	3.71			
	Broken family	6	12.66	4.54			
	Total	326	11.69	3.77			
<b>Conflict</b>	Nuclear family	264	9.01	3.64	.578	.262	-
	Extended family	56	8.44	3.69			
	Broken family	6	9.16	2.63			
	Total	326	8.92	3.63			
<b>Assistance</b>	Nuclear family	264	19.60	5.18	2.427	.032	1>2
	Extended family	56	17.92	5.66			
	Broken family	6	18.33	6.21			
	Total	326	19.29	5.30			
<b>Protection</b>	Nuclear family	264	14.75	4.11	1.376	.254	-
	Extended family	56	13.78	4.13			
	Broken family	6	13.83	3.86			
	Total	326	14.57	4.12			
<b>Closeness</b>	Nuclear family	264	18.62	5.13	.229	.795	-
	Extended family	56	18.10	5.37			
	Broken family	6	18.50	4.32			
	Total	326	18.53	5.15			

It can be determined from the table that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in different family structures in togetherness, conflict, protection and closeness at the significance level of P: 0.05 while significant differences were determined for assistance being higher for students in nuclear families than those in extended ones.

**Table 6.** t values of differences in the mean scores students were given for sportive activity performance and subscales of peer relations and standard deviations

Levels of peer relations	Performing sportive activities	N	X	SD	t	p
<b>Togetherness</b>	Yes	191	12.37	3.92	3.962	.000
	No	135	10.73	3.32		
<b>Conflict</b>	Yes	191	9.23	3.90	1.839	.067
	No	135	8.48	3.17		
<b>Assistance</b>	Yes	191	19.63	5.25	1.395	.164
	No	135	18.80	5.36		
<b>Protection</b>	Yes	191	14.91	4.16	1.780	.076
	No	135	14.08	4.02		
<b>Closeness</b>	Yes	191	18.90	5.23	1.567	.118
	No	135	18.00	4.99		

It can be stated by considering the results of the scores given to students for sportive activity and peer relations in the table that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in conflict, assistance, protection and closeness at the significance level of  $P: 0.05$  while significant differences were determined for togetherness being higher for students performing sportive activities than those not performing.

**Table 7.** t values of differences in the mean scores students were given for sportive activity type and subscales of peer relations and standard deviations

Levels of peer relations	Sportive activity type	N	X	SD	t	p
<b>Togetherness</b>	Collective sports	96	12.40	3.79	.103	.272
	Individualistic sports	95	12.34	4.07		
<b>Conflict</b>	Collective sports	96	9.50	4.00	.959	.676
	Individualistic sports	95	8.95	3.80		
<b>Assistance</b>	Collective sports	96	19.44	4.89	-.503	.220
	Individualistic sports	95	19.83	5.61		
<b>Protection</b>	Collective sports	96	14.51	4.00	-1.339	.169
	Individualistic sports	95	15.31	4.30		
<b>Closeness</b>	Collective sports	96	18.50	5.07	-1.076	.212
	Individualistic sports	95	19.31	5.39		

It can be stated when considered the table that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in all subscales at the significance level of  $P: 0.05$ .

**Table 8.** Mean scores and standard deviations the students received for the reason of weekly sportive activity performance and peer relations

Levels of peer relations	Reasons of sportive activity	N	X	SD	F	P	
<b>Togetherness</b>	A good physical appearance	10	12.20	3.64	5.245	.002	4<2.3
	For wellness	67	12.26	3.67			
	Mental and physical recreation	114	12.45	4.11			
	Not performing a sportive activity	135	10.73	3.32			
	Total	326	11.69	3.77			
<b>Conflict</b>	A good physical appearance	10	11.50	3.06	2.774	.042	1>2.4
	For wellness	67	8.80	3.66			
	Mental and physical recreation	114	9.28	4.05			
	Not performing a sportive activity	135	8.48	3.17			
	Total	326	8.92	3.63			
<b>Assistance</b>	A good physical appearance	10	17.70	7.14	1.151	.329	-
	For wellness	67	19.91	5.20			
	Mental and physical recreation	114	19.64	5.12			
	Not performing a sportive activity	135	18.80	5.36			
	Total	326	19.29	5.30			
<b>Protection</b>	A good physical appearance	10	15.40	4.59	1.239	.295	-
	For wellness	67	14.62	4.16			
	Mental and physical recreation	114	15.03	4.15			
	Not performing a sportive activity	135	14.08	4.02			
	Total	326	14.57	4.12			
<b>Closeness</b>	A good physical appearance	10	20.30	5.90	1.413	.239	-
	For wellness	67	18.32	4.94			
	Mental and physical recreation	114	19.12	5.35			
	Not performing a sportive activity	135	18.00	4.99			
	Total	326	18.53	5.15			

It can be seen when considered the mean scores of students given them for the reasons of sportive activity performance and subscales of peer relations in the table that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in assistance, protection and closeness at the significance level of  $P: 0.05$  while the differences were determined to be statistically significant for togetherness and conflict. In togetherness, scores of the students performing sportive activities for wellness and mental and physical recreation were found to be higher than those not performing an activity while in conflict, mean scores of the students performing sportive activities for a good physical appearance were found to be higher than those performing activities for wellness and not performing sportive activities.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In the present study conducted over 326 university students (159 females) in 20 – 23 age group, relationships were investigated between sportive activity performance and different levels of peer relations and some other factors in daily life of university students and it was found that 191 students reported that they perform sportive activities while 135 not performing.

When considered the  $t$  values of differences in the mean scores students were given for subscales of peer relations and standard deviations, it was found that there is no significant difference for togetherness. Females received higher mean scores in assistance, protection and closeness than males, but lower scores in conflict. This result is supported by Tozoglu et al. (2014) where no significant differences were found in the effects of different variables and sports on peer support levels. It was found in another study by Çırpan and Çınar (2013) where the relationship between academic success and peer support was investigated among the students attending health care vocational school that there is no statistically significant difference between genders. Such a result is in also close convenience with the results in the present study.

Statistically no significant differences were found between the mean scores of students at different income levels in assistance, protection and closeness while significant differences were determined for togetherness and conflict.

Mean scores of togetherness subscale were found to be lower in the student group with a monthly income of 300 TL and below than in the group with 701 TL and above while the mean scores given for conflict were also lower in the group with a monthly income of 300 TL and above than those with monthly income of 301-500 TL and 501-700 TL. Such results may show that as the income level increase peer relations can also increase.

It is seen that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in different family structures in togetherness, conflict, protection and closeness while statistically significant differences were determined for assistance being higher for students in nuclear families than those in extended ones.

It was found from the results of the scores given to students for sportive activity and peer relations that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in conflict, assistance, protection and closeness while significant differences were determined for togetherness by observing higher scores for students performing sportive activities than those not performing. In togetherness, such a high mean score of students may be caused by the fact that sportive activity performing students live together in sportive environments more frequently than those not performing. It was seen that there is no statistically significant

difference between the mean scores of students given for sports types in all subscales.

It can be seen when considered the mean scores of students given them for the reasons of sportive activity performance and subscales of peer relations that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of students in assistance, protection and closeness while the differences were determined to be statistically significant for togetherness and conflict. In togetherness, mean scores of the students performing sportive activities for wellness and mental and physical recreation were found to be higher than those not performing an activity while in conflict, mean scores of the students performing sportive activities for a good physical appearance were found to be higher than those performing activities for wellness and not performing sportive activities. It may be stated from these results that performing sportive activities can contribute to togetherness peer relations.

It may be accepted according to the results of the study that sportive activities can contribute to the social development of individuals in peer relations. Because of such a fact, directorates of universities, local administrations, school managements and families should be sensitive and give supports to individuals for taking place in sportive activities and sports life. It is vitally important to investigate other factors thought to have positive effects on peer relations.

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