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**ASKERİ EĞİTİM SİSTEMİNDE BEDEN EĞİTİMİ VE SPOR FAALİYETLERİNİN
ZARARLI ALIŞKANLIKLARA KARŞI ETKİSİ***

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Öz: Fiziksel aktivite sadece sağlığı desteklemekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda dostluğu geliştirir ve bireylerin zararlı alışkanlıklardan kaçınmasına yardımcı olur. Özellikle travmatik deneyim riski yüksek olan askeri personel arasında düzenli fiziksel aktivite yaşlanmayı geciktirebilir ve fiziksel kapasiteyi artırabilir. Bu çalışma, askeri personelin zararlı alışkanlıklardan kaçınmasına yardımcı olmada sporun rolünü incelemektedir. Araştırma, 24 maddeden oluşan 'Zararlı Alışkanlıklar için Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Ölçeği' kullanılarak, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Muhafız Alayı'ndan üst düzey askeri personele uygulanmıştır. Bulgular, beden eğitimi ve sporun ordu içinde zararlı alışkanlıkların önlenmesinde önemli bir rol oynadığını ve depresyon, madde bağımlılığı ve stres bozuklukları gibi konuları ele aldığını göstermektedir. Bu sorunlar tütün kullanımı, kötü beslenme, fiziksel hareketsizlik ve alkol tüketimi gibi risk faktörleriyle yakından bağlantılıdır. Dünya Sağlık Örgütü'nün tütün kullanımının yılda beş milyondan fazla kişinin ölümüne neden olduğu yönündeki raporu göz önüne alındığında, çalışma bu risklerin azaltılmasında sporun öneminin altını çiziyor. Makale, beden eğitimi ve sporun zararlı alışkanlıkların önlenmesindeki etkisini değerlendirmeyi amaçlamakta ve askeri eğitime daha etkili entegrasyon için stratejiler önermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Askeri Sistem, zararlı alışkanlıklar, spor, sağlık

**THE EFFECT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES IN
MILITARY EDUCATION SYSTEM AGAINST HARMFUL HABITS**

Abstract: Physical activity not only promotes health but also fosters camaraderie and helps individuals avoid harmful habits. Particularly among military personnel, who are at high risk of traumatic experiences, regular physical activity can delay aging and enhance physical capacities. This study examines the role of sports in helping military personnel avoid detrimental habits. The research was applied to senior military personnel from the Presidential Guard Regiment using the 'Physical Education and Sports Survey for Harmful Habits' consisting of 24 items. Findings indicate that physical education and sports play a significant role in preventing harmful habits within the military, addressing issues like depression, substance dependency, and stress disorders. These issues are closely linked to risk factors such as tobacco use, poor diet, physical inactivity, and alcohol consumption. Given the World Health Organization's report that tobacco use causes over five million deaths annually, the study underscores the importance of sports in mitigating these risks. The article aims to evaluate the impact of physical education and sports on preventing harmful habits and suggests strategies for more effective integration within military education.

Keywords: Military System, harmful habits, sport, health



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INTRODUCTION

Scientific research indicates that regular physical activity can delay the aging process. Moreover, it is suggested that individuals aged 50 who regularly exercise may possess better physical capacity than inactive 35-year-olds. This demonstrates that physical activity can enhance an individual's physical capacity even in old age (Tekin, 2022). For a healthy life, it is crucial for individuals to ensure their own happiness and spread it to those around them. One of the most effective activities for individuals, teams, and groups to relieve the stress of today's world is engaging in sports. Sports not only contribute to individual health but also provide a social experience through interaction with others. Sports done for health rather than competition bring people together and divert them from harmful habits. Consequently, sports are one of the most reliable methods to prevent harmful habits and reduce the time spent on them. This study aims to determine the role of physical education and sports in helping military leaders avoid harmful habits and to explain the role and importance of sports in helping military personnel overcome these habits.

Although the term "harmful habits" often brings to mind alcohol, drugs, and medication, many substances or behaviors, such as coffee or tobacco, gambling addiction, overeating, and psychological obsessions, can create harmful habits at an addictive level. Today, substances like morphine, heroin, cannabis, alcohol, and tobacco, which cause physiological and psychological dependence and lead to societal degradation, economic issues, family disruptions, and social dysfunctions, are among the most notable harmful habits (Büyükkaragöz, 1993).

Considering the 21st-century high-tech, fast-paced, and error-prone battlefield, the impact of military personnel's health on decision-making is particularly significant (Keller et al., 2005). Military personnel are at high risk of exposure to potentially traumatic events, making them vulnerable to psychological distress and mental health issues such as depression, domestic violence, substance abuse, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Hoge et al., 2002). Therefore, units must operate at peak efficiency, and inefficiencies caused by work stress and mental health issues can have severe consequences (Pflanz and Sonnek, 2002).

Studies show that the prevalent risk factors for chronic diseases are actually a short list, including tobacco use, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, alcohol consumption, uncontrolled high blood pressure, and high-fat levels (Mokdad, 2004). The World Health Organization (WHO) describes smoking, one of the most significant harmful habits, as the world's fastest-spreading and longest-lasting epidemic. According to WHO data, one in ten adults dies due to the consequences of tobacco use, causing more than 5 million deaths annually. Therefore, WHO has declared smoking the world's largest health problem (Kaşıkçı, Ünsal, Çoban and Avşar, 2008).

A study examining smoking prevalence and influencing factors among 1129 soldiers found that the overall smoking rate was 69.6%, with 2.5% (28 soldiers) starting smoking during military service. Among these 28 soldiers, 92.9% cited economic reasons and stress as reasons for starting smoking (Bakir et al., 2003). Similarly, a 2006 study among U.S. military leaders found that the heavy alcohol use rate among 18-25-year-old service members was 27.3% in the past 30 days, compared to 15.3% among civilians of the same age group (Fernandez, Hartman and Olshaker, 2006).

Stress, one of the most significant health problems of our time, disrupts bodily functions and affects quality of life (Gencer, Çınar and Comba, 2015). Stress, caused by various factors, is

characterized by imbalance in bodily functions, nervous system disorders, and psychic tension (Kocaturk and Gupta, 1994). Expressing emotions like anxiety, doubt, unease, restlessness, tension, excitement and fear, stress has become an inseparable part of life today. Increasingly difficult living conditions, changing human relationships, and uncertainties contribute to rising stress levels (Barutçugil, 2004). The employment of individuals who take risks is inevitable for the armed forces.

Military operations cannot be conducted without personnel who accept the risk of death or injury. Such risk factors create stress on military personnel. All personnel in the armed forces can alleviate the fatigue and stress brought by their work environment through regular walking, running, and exercise programs. This way, they can start the next day more energetically and happily. Exercise is a series of planned and repetitive movements aimed at maintaining and enhancing an individual's physical fitness. Spending leisure time on physical exercise and sports activities is recommended to prevent or reduce stress caused by technology and urbanization on individuals and society. A study in the military system found that pilots serving on high-performance aircraft in the Turkish Air Force can maintain their strength, abilities, and effectiveness through scheduled sports and strength training, allowing them to lead a healthy life and maintain their form (Alparslan, Kılıçgil and Başpınar, 2004). A study on 11 fighter pilots examined the effect of aerobic training on Gtolerance level. An 11-week muscle development program was implemented. The subjects' Gtolerance was measured in the human centrifuge using Anti-G Straining Maneuvers (AGSM) in 15 second 4.5 and 7G periods. The duration of AGSM increased by 39% after the training (Durukan, 2008).

The use of harmful habits like alcohol in the military system is not just a contemporary issue. Specific subgroups within the armed forces, particularly young, single, and trauma-exposed individuals, are more prone to heavy alcohol use. Some countries' regular armies view alcohol use as a tool for adaptation and operational questioning, but this indicates a need to change entrenched habits and traditions. In this context, the example of the United Kingdom can be examined (Jones and Fear, 2011). When we look at studies covering recent history and major wars, we see that such harmful habits were prevalent during war time. For instance, during World War I, most fighting countries provided some form of alcohol to their front-line troops alleviate the stress of trench warfare. Although the French government banned production and sale of absinthe, similar liquors due to their intoxicating qualities in February 1915, soldiers were given half a liter of ordinary wine daily (Aymard, 1917). Similarly, the German Army provided cognac or light beer to its troops in war zones. However, with the outbreak of the war, the Russian state banned the distillation and sale of vodka to prevent excessive alcohol consumption by both soldiers and factory workers (Jones and Fear, 2011). The relationship between heavy drinking and military service is generally accepted, but the role of war in forming this habit has not been thoroughly studied. For instance, a survey of 100 alcoholic former soldiers who applied to the Knoxville Veterans Hospital in Iowa between 1937 and 1942 recorded their reasons for turning to drink. Although all had served during World War I, none cited active service in France as a causal factor. Instead, the common explanation for excessive alcohol consumption was family pressure; however, some admitted that drinking alleviated anxiety or depression (Jones and Fear, 2011).

Gambling, while not as prevalent as alcohol, tobacco, and other harmful habits, also significantly affects the health of military personnel. Most military bases or nearby areas offer gambling opportunities, and a small but significant percentage of military personnel experience gambling problems. Surveys of active military personnel reveal that 6.3% to 8.1% have experienced at least one gambling problem in their lifetime. Furthermore, 1.2% of respondents

can be classified as level 3 or pathological gamblers at some point in their lives. Military personnel are predominantly young, male, and ethnic minorities, and these demographic factors are associated with a high risk of gambling problems. Heavy alcohol consumption and smoking rates are higher among young military personnel, and as previously mentioned, these behaviors are associated with gambling problems. Lastly, (Bray et al., 1995), indicate that military personnel have relatively high rates of risk-taking and sensation-seeking behaviors, both associated with problematic gambling. High levels of risk-taking were detected in 28.0% of the military population, and these individuals tend to engage in various health-risk behaviors. Taken together, addictive behaviors are thought to have a significant impact on military readiness (Steenbergh, et al., 2008).

Physical activity helps prevent and control risky behaviors like tobacco, alcohol, and other substance use, unhealthy eating, and violence (WHO, 2023). However, conducting public health campaigns within the military system is quite challenging, presenting the army with a significant dilemma. Considering how to address an association established over centuries among many national groups can be challenging. Directing personnel towards sports and ensuring sports officers are well-equipped and provide proper guidance can help in this regard. Therefore, identifying military leaders' attitudes towards harmful habits like alcohol within the military system and understanding the preventive effect of sports on these habits is crucial.

Examining the place of physical education and sports activities within military training, the necessary training for the officer profession has been provided by military schools since the late 18th century and fully since the 19th century. Countries have adopted different principles regarding this training in each period. In Turkey, the officer training system has undergone frequent changes since the establishment of modern military schools and has tended towards models of successful countries. The Ottoman/Turkish officer training system was initially influenced by the French, later by the German, and finally by the American systems (Ateş, 2022).

Today, Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) personnel undergo a preliminary selection based on physical characteristics, height, weight compliance, and robustness before being admitted to schools. This requirement shows that personnel are perceived as reliable and reputable within society and that this image is initially determined. They naturally engage in sports or feel the need to do so to maintain their physical form and health. Military laws and regulations determine the height and weight compliance of personnel and verify their age-appropriate abilities through annual examinations. TSK personnel have free sports hours and days, making them feel like athletes. TSK targets its personnel and civil society as an audience that understands the importance of sports and consciously makes efforts to engage in sports. Sports are essential for every person, as they contribute to human health, creative thinking, adherence to rules, and self-discipline, as seen in TSK. Every year, TSK issues a sports directive, and specific days are designated as sports hours to encourage all personnel to engage in sports. These arrangements aim to continuously review and improve the physical condition and performance of personnel, ensuring they are always at the highest level of physical and mental preparedness.

METHODOLOGY

Research Model

This study is survey model research expressing the views of military leaders within the military education system on the role of physical education and sports in avoiding harmful habits. The

research is a field study. Therefore, the 'survey technique' will be used as a data collection tool, and 'simple random sampling' will be used in sample selection. In the analysis phase of the study, 'descriptive statistical techniques' will be used to reach conclusions through statistical significance testing.

Research Group

The sample group of the study comprises the leading military personnel within the Presidential Guard Regiment. The inclusion criterion for the study is to be an officer, non-commissioned officer, or specialist sergeant among the leading military personnel within the Presidential Guard Regiment and to volunteer.

Research Ethics

This study was approved by the Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee of Hitit University on April 5, 2024, with the approval number 2024-82.

Data Collection Tools

The "Physical Education and Sports Survey for Harmful Habits" (ZAYBESA), developed by Erbaş, Göral, and Varol (2014), was adapted for military physical education and sports with necessary permissions. The ZAYBESA survey form consists of 24 items. The response format for the items is "always," "usually," "often," "sometimes," and "never." The survey items were developed by Erbaş, et al., (2014), who are experts in the field, and adapted to military physical education and sports with the necessary permissions from the developers.

Data Analysis

The data obtained in the study were analyzed using the SPSS 25.0 software package. The skewness and kurtosis values of the data showed that the skewness and kurtosis coefficients were between -2 and +2, indicating that the data followed a normal distribution (George and Mallery, 2019). Frequency, percentage calculations, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and reliability coefficient calculations were conducted in the analysis. A 95% confidence interval was used for the analysis.

Note: Since our study focuses on military personnel, demographic data was not collected.

RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptive Values of the Scale

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Min	Max	\bar{x}	Ss	Skewness	Kurtosis
Total	0.822	2.0	4.96	3.84	0.428	-0.419	1.375

According to Table 1, participants' scores regarding the role of physical education in avoiding harmful habits are moderate (\bar{x} =3.84).

Table 2. Participants' Opinions on the Role of Physical Education in Avoiding Harmful Habits

Survey Questions	Always		Usually		Often		Sometimes		Never	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
1 I exercise	-	-	-	3	1,8	73	42,7	95	55,6	
2 I like physical education activities	-	3	1,8	4	2,3	86	50,3	78	45,6	
3 I think physical education activities benefit my health	-	1	,6	6	3,5	58	33,9	106	62,0	
4 Physical education activities are the best time spent with friends	2,3	13	7,6	18	10,5	81	47,4	55	32,2	
5 I find physical education activities relaxing and distracting from boredom	,6	5	2,9	12	7,0	75	43,9	78	45,6	
6 I forget my problems during physical education activities	2,9	16	9,4	23	13,5	65	38,0	62	36,3	
7 I see physical education activities as a free activity	1,2	18	10,5	24	14,0	48	28,1	79	46,2	
8 Physical education activities shape my discipline and behavior	1,8	13	7,6	9	5,3	82	48,0	64	37,4	
9 I am curious about learning		1	,6	1	,6	68	39,8	101	59,1	
10 I imitate some friends	26,3	69	40,4	21	12,3	22	12,9	14	8,2	
11 There are harmful habits I avoid thanks to physical education activities	11,1	41	24,0	14	8,2	60	35,1	37	21,6	
12 I think physical education activities are sufficient for encouraging beneficial behaviors	1,8	14	8,2	21	12,3	95	55,6	38	22,2	
13 I think a more beneficial activity should replace physical education activities	9,9	68	39,8	51	29,8	18	10,5	17	9,9	
14 I believe the tendency towards harmful habits starts during school	3,5	12	7,0	17	9,9	62	36,3	74	43,3	
15 I use cigarettes, alcohol, etc.	31,6	33	19,3	13	7,6	58	33,9	13	7,6	
16 I believe friends influence the initiation of habits like cigarettes and alcohol	5,3	4	2,3	7	4,1	58	33,9	93	54,4	
17 I think exercise is the best way to avoid harmful habits	1,2	10	5,8	22	12,9	65	38,0	72	42,1	
18 I see that my self-confidence increases with physical education activities	1,8	4	2,3	18	10,5	76	44,4	70	40,9	
19 I think physical education activities are for passing time	33,3	83	48,5	7	4,1	18	10,5	6	3,5	
20 I set some goals through physical education activities	1,8	23	13,5	43	25,1	79	46,2	23	13,5	
21 I believe physical education activities will help me be in a good position in the future	1,8	16	9,4	28	16,4	75	43,9	49	28,7	
22 I think my interest in sports increases through physical education activities	2,3	16	9,4	15	8,8	88	51,5	48	28,1	
23 Through sports, I realize I deserve what I achieve	,6	9	5,3	20	11,7	59	52,0	52	30,4	
24 I agree with the statement 'Alcohol kills, gambling ruins, sports entertain'	1,8	3	1,8	4	2,3	43	25,1	118	69,0	

Based on the responses in Table 1, the highest value for the item "I exercise" is in the "never" option (55.6%). For "I like physical education activities," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (50.3%). For "I think physical education activities benefit my health," the highest value is in the "never" option (62.0%). For "Physical education activities are the best time spent with friends," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (47.4%). For "I find physical education activities relaxing and distracting from boredom," the highest value is in the "never" option (45.6%). For "I forget my problems during physical education activities," the

highest value is in the "sometimes" option (38.0%). For "I see physical education activities as a free activity," the highest value is in the "never" option (46.2%). For "Physical education activities shape my discipline and behavior," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (48.0%). For "I am curious about learning," the highest value is in the "never" option (59.1%). For "I imitate some friends," the highest value is in the "usually" option (40.4%). For "There are harmful habits I avoid thanks to physical education activities," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (35.1%). For "I think physical education activities are sufficient for encouraging beneficial behaviors," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (55.6%). For "I think a more beneficial activity should replace physical education activities," the highest value is in the "usually" option (39.8%). For "I believe the tendency towards harmful habits starts during school," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (36.3%). For "I use cigarettes, alcohol, etc.," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (33.9%). For "I believe friends influence the initiation of habits like cigarettes and alcohol," the highest value is in the "never" option (54.4%). For "I think exercise is the best way to avoid harmful habits," the highest value is in the "never" option (42.1%). For "I see that my self-confidence increases with physical education activities," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (44.4%). For "I think physical education activities are for passing time," the highest value is in the "usually" option (48.5%). For "I set some goals through physical education activities," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (46.2%).

For "I believe physical education activities will help me be in a good position in the future," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (43.9%). For "I think my interest in sports increases through physical education activities," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (51.5%). For "Through sports, I realize I deserve what I achieve," the highest value is in the "sometimes" option (52.0%). For "I agree with the statement 'Alcohol kills, gambling ruins, sports entertain'," the highest value is in the "never" option (69.0%).

Table 3. Arithmetic Means of Participants' Opinions on the Role of Physical Education in Avoiding Harmful Habits

Survey Questions		N	\bar{x}	Ss
1	I exercise	171	4,54	,534
2	I like physical education activities	171	4,40	,628
3	I think physical education activities benefit my health	171	4,57	,593
4	Physical education activities are the best time spent with friends	171	3,99	,973
5	I find physical education activities relaxing and distracting from boredom	171	4,31	,777
6	I forget my problems during physical education activities	171	3,95	1,067
7	I see physical education activities as a free activity	171	4,08	1,063
8	Physical education activities shape my discipline and behavior	171	4,12	,938
9	I am curious about learning	171	4,57	,541
10	I imitate some friends	171	2,36	1,231
11	There are harmful habits i avoid thanks to physical education activities	171	3,32	1,345
12	I think physical education activities are sufficient for encouraging beneficial behaviors	171	3,88	,906
13	I think a more beneficial activity should replace physical education activities	171	2,71	1,104
14	I believe the tendency towards harmful habits starts during school	171	4,09	1,062
15	I use cigarettes, alcohol, etc.	171	2,67	1,414
16	I believe friends influence the initiation of habits like cigarettes and alcohol	171	4,30	1,034
17	I think exercise is the best way to avoid harmful habits	171	4,14	,935
18	I see that my self-confidence increases with physical education activities	171	4,20	,853
19	I think physical education activities are for passing time	171	2,02	1,057
20	I set some goals through physical education activities	171	3,56	,946
21	I believe physical education activities will help me be in a good position in the future	171	3,88	,987
22	I think my interest in sports increases through physical education activities	171	3,94	,977
23	Through sports, i realize i deserve what i achieve	171	4,06	,827
24	I agree with the statement 'alcohol kills, gambling ruins, sports entertain'	171	4,58	,781

According to the review results of Table 3, the item with the highest mean is "I agree with the statement 'Alcohol kills, gambling ruins, sports entertain'" ($\bar{x} = 4.58$). The item with the lowest mean is "I think physical education activities are for passing time" ($\bar{x} = 2.02$)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate the role of physical education and sports in preventing and controlling harmful habits within the military system. Firstly, scientific research supports that physical activity can delay the aging process and that individuals who regularly exercise may have better physical capacity. Additionally, it is emphasized that sports not only contribute to individual health but also provide a social experience and that sports done for health rather than competition help divert from negative habits. Considering these points, the importance of military personnel's health on decision-making and the vulnerability of military personnel exposed to potentially traumatic events to psychological distress indicate that physical education and sports can play a critical role in preventing harmful habits in the military system.

Based on our data, it has been determined that the role of physical education and sports activities in helping participants avoid harmful habits is moderate. Notably, the majority of participants consider sports important for avoiding harmful habits (55.6%), have conflicting views about liking physical education activities (50.3%), and do not accept that physical education activities benefit health (62.0%). On the other hand, participants show a more contradictory attitude towards the role of physical education activities in shaping discipline and behavior (48.0%). These findings highlight the potential of physical education and sports activities in combating harmful habits, while also revealing the diversity and contradictions in participants' attitudes.

Similarly, different studies have examined the relationships between physical activity and smoking and alcohol consumption among different student groups. One study conducted on 1274 students studying in various health fields at a university in Ankara found that students who did not consume alcohol and cigarettes had higher levels of physical activity (Özan et al., 2004). Another study evaluated the relationship between smoking and physical activity among adolescents, showing a significant relationship between smoking and physical activity (Subaşı, 2005). Additionally, a study conducted on 203 students at the School of Physical Education and Sports in Kütahya found that students who did not use cigarettes and alcohol had significantly higher levels of physical activity (Karakuş, 2005).

Another study found that sports activities are associated with smoking and alcohol consumption. In this context, increasing the time allocated to sports activities can lead to a reduction in time spent on harmful habits. Therefore, sports can offer a suitable and healthy option for individuals looking to quit harmful habits (Yermilova, Stroiteleva, Egorova and Vanina, 2021).

Based on the results of our study, physical education and sports play a critical role in preventing harmful habits in the military system. Our research shows that regular physical activity can delay the aging process and that sports not only contribute to individual health but also provide a social experience. These findings emphasize the importance of military personnel's health on decisionmaking and highlight the vulnerability of military personnel exposed to potentially traumatic events to psychological distress.

Furthermore, our findings indicate that physical education and sports activities have a moderate impact on avoiding harmful habits. Specifically, participants' thoughts on the importance of

sports in avoiding harmful habits underscore the potential of sports in this regard. However, the conflicting views of some participants on liking physical education activities and accepting their health benefits suggest a need for awareness and attitude change in this area.

In conclusion, our study emphasizes the critical role of physical education and sports in helping military personnel avoid harmful habits. In this context, the military system should further promote and support sports and physical education. These measures can help improve both the physical and psychological health of military personnel, aiding them in avoiding harmful habits.

Studies in this direction support the idea that physical education and sports are an effective strategy for maintaining the health of military personnel and preventing harmful habits.

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