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Investigation of aggression and happiness level in parents of 8-11 years old children playing sports

Investigación de los niveles de agresividad y felicidad en padres de niños de 8 a 11 años que practican deportes

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Abstract:

The aim of the study is to determine the rates of aggression and happiness of the parents of three groups of 8-11 year old children who do athletics, martial arts and no sports. The sample of the study consisted of the parents of 8-11 year old children in primary and middle school in Turkey. For the evaluation, normality test, T-test for pairwise comparisons, ANOVA for multiple comparisons and correlation analysis were used to determine the relationship between two variables. The results showed that the relationship between aggression and happiness levels was statistically significant at $\alpha=0.05$ significance level, although it was a very weak and negative relationship. Among the demographic variables, there was a significant difference between the number of children of the parents and the sports branch in which the children were interested and the level of happiness ($p<.05$). There was no significant difference between the demographic variables of marriage duration and income level of the parents and happiness level. There was no significant difference between the level of aggression and demographic variables. As a result, it can be concluded that parents who are interested in athletics and have only one child are happier. Also, it is an expected result that happy parents are not aggressive.

Keywords: sports, children, parents, aggression, happiness.

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es determinar los índices de agresividad y felicidad de los padres de tres grupos de niños de 8 a 11 años que practican atletismo, artes marciales y ningún deporte. La muestra del estudio estuvo formada por padres de niños de 8 a 11 años que cursan estudios primarios y secundarios en Turquía. Para la evaluación, se utilizaron la prueba de normalidad, la prueba T para comparaciones por pares, el ANOVA para comparaciones múltiples y el análisis de correlación para determinar la relación entre dos variables. Los resultados mostraron que la relación entre los niveles de agresión y felicidad era estadísticamente significativa al nivel de significación $\alpha=0,05$, aunque la relación era muy débil y negativa. Entre las variables demográficas, se encontró una diferencia significativa entre el número de hijos de los padres y la rama deportiva que interesaba a los hijos y el nivel de felicidad ($p<.05$). No hubo diferencias significativas entre las variables demográficas de duración del matrimonio y nivel de ingresos de los padres y el nivel de felicidad. No se encontraron diferencias significativas entre el nivel de agresividad y las variables demográficas. Como resultado, se puede concluir que los padres que se interesan por el atletismo y tienen un solo hijo son más felices. También es un resultado esperado que los padres felices no sean agresivos.

Palabras clave: deporte, niños, padres, agresividad, felicidad.

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Introduction

Today, sport is defined as a powerful activity that is loved, encouraged and participated in by people of all ages with different interests (TDK, 2024). Millions of young people around the world participate in sports activities that are considered to have a positive impact on their psychosocial development and propensity to exercise. Or they become professionals themselves (Elliott & Drummond, 2016). Moreover, sport shapes children and adolescents' behavioral patterns as well as their value orientations (Leo et. al., 2015). However, it is also considered as a pillar of education that lays the foundations for the expression of behaviors in society in other areas of social life. Scholars in the field of sport (Elliott & Drummond, 2016., Leo et al., 2015; Schwebel et. al., 2016; Eratlı Şirin et. al., 2021) aim to identify what influences children who experience sport. And they emphasize that the role of parents is not only the decision to take part in sport activities (Timperio et al., 2013; Wheeler, 2012), but also the tendency to maintain this decision (Yesu & Harwood, 2015, Uluöz, 2022).

In the social stratification of sport, parents play an important role in attracting, influencing and engaging their children in sport. The critical role of parents has been demonstrated in numerous studies showing how parents influence children's sport experiences through their behavior (Dorsch et al., 2016, Charbonneau et al., 2020). To put it another way, some parents enroll their children in certain sports, acting according to what the sports branches contribute and what characteristics they want to develop in their children, along with cultural prejudices. Bourdieu (1986) shows that working class parents prefer physical and masculine sports such as weightlifting, boxing and athletics, while upper class parents value more refined and culturally influenced activities (tennis, golf, etc.).

Since parents are the main center of socialization for children's participation in sports, it is important to investigate what parents' perceptions of martial arts participation are. In general, children with strong parental support also appear to have stronger motivation to participate in martial arts (Zeng & Yang, 2021). Moreover, many authors have reported that parents see martial arts as an important tool for their children

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to defend themselves and develop their self-esteem (Grzywacz et al., 2016, Lantz, 2002). In this context, considering that martial arts have characteristics such as discipline, self-control and self-confidence, parents' preferences are not surprising at all (Mickelsson & Stylin, 2021).

Parental aggression refers to behaviors that may be harmful for children and adolescents (Park et al., 2015). Psychological aggression is defined as the use of psychological force to punish or control misbehavior (Straus & Carolyn, 2003, Wang et al., 2016). This topic has attracted research interest since the 80s (Milovanović et al., 2020) Psychological violence against children includes shouting at them, as well as insulting and threatening them (Marcal, 2021). Previous studies have shown that physical and mental aggression is highly harmful to children, especially in the early years of development (Black et al., 2017). A meta-analysis found that parental physical aggression has a negative impact on the child's physical and social development and can lead to a persistent mental health problem (Gershoff & Grogan, 2016). In this context, studies have shown that parental psychological aggression can be transmitted across generations and may lead to an increase in mental health problems (Wang & Liu, 2018).

Happiness, another main concept of the study, means an increase in positive emotions, satisfaction with life and a decrease in negative emotions (TDK, 2024). Happier adolescents feel more peaceful and secure, make decisions more easily, do better work, participate more, enjoy a healthier and more active life, and finally feel more satisfied with their lives. Parenting is probably the most important job and the most important role for every human being Parental happiness is defined as a shared experience of joy, contentment and well-being in which family members feel satisfied and happy with the support of other family members (Waters, 2020). Research has also emphasized that families, especially in Western countries, consider communication and sharing among family members as core family values compared to other countries (Shek, 2001). Children can only find happiness in relationally healthy and functional families.

Functions such as health communication, problem solving (Demirtaş Zorbaz & Korkut Owen, 2013), controlling behaviors, achieving roles, establishing emotional

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bonds and being emotionally willing point to a happy family with positive relationships. It has been found that in healthy families, family members manage their lives in line with their goals and values and are not influenced by others, their self-worth is high, and their communication is direct, open, clear, distinct and honest (Satir, 2001).

When the studies in the literature were examined, few studies were found to investigate the effect of family relationships on happiness in terms of school children (Jin & Ahn, 2019; Badri et al., 2018). Due to the importance of the current critical period, the lack of a study investigating the way school children perceive their families and measuring the effect on their aggression and happiness is considered as an important deficiency. Therefore, in this study, it was aimed to determine the rates of aggression and happiness of the parents of three groups of 8-11 year olds who were not interested in athletics, combat sports and no sports at all. In line with this purpose, the hypothesis questions that the study seeks to answer are given below:

- 1: Is there a significant difference between the level of aggression and the sport branch that the parents' children are interested in?
- 2: Is there a significant difference between parents' level of happiness and the sports branch their children are interested in?
- 3: Is there a relationship between parents' level of aggression and their level of happiness?

Sample of the Research

This study was conducted to determine the aggression and happiness rates of children by applying the aggression and happiness scales to the parents of 3 groups who are not interested in athletics, combat sports and no sports. The sample of the study was carried out with 150 parents of 8-11 years old children in primary and secondary school age in Osmaniye province in Turkey in 2023.

Data Collection Tool

In this study, (i) personal information form, (ii) aggression scale and (iii) Oxford happiness scale were used to evaluate the aggression and happiness rates of children by

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applying aggression and happiness scales to their parents. Some brief information about the data collection tools used in the study is given below.

Personal Information Form

Personal Information Form was prepared to collect information about the parents included in the study. The Personal Information Form includes questions related to determining personal information such as gender, age, number of children, marital status, income level and sports history of the parents.

Aggression Scale: The Aggression Scale used in our study consists of 40 items and one dimension and was developed by Kocatürk (1982). Later, the scale was developed by Tuzgöl (1998) and used in his own studies and he stated that the total internal consistency coefficient of the scale was 0.85. In the study, the data were scored with a 5-point Likert-type rating. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the Aggression Scale is a valid and reliable measurement tool that can be used on parents. As a result of the analysis, the reliability value of the scale was found to be Cronbach's Alpha 0.82.

Oxford Happiness Scale: The Oxford Happiness Scale Short Form-OHS-S (Hills & Argyle, 2002), which is used to assess the level of happiness, was developed based on the Oxford Happiness Scale Short Form-OHS-S. It was adapted into Turkish by Doğan and Çötök (2011). Although the scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale, Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient was determined as 0.85. Factor analysis revealed that the scale consists of one dimension and 7 items. The reliability of the scale was determined as Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.72.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of the data obtained as a result of our study, the significance level was applied as $p \leq 0.05$ and SPSS 26.0 was used as the program. The data were tested with SPSS 26.08 program with different analysis techniques appropriate to the problems. At first, the "skewness and kurtosis" normality test was used to determine whether the research data were normally distributed. Then, t-test was used for pairwise

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comparisons, ANOVA for multiple comparisons, and correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between two variables.

Results

This section presents the findings, conclusions and interpretations obtained from the analyses.

Table 1. Normality Test Results

	Skewness and kurtosis		Cronbach's Alpha
	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's
Aggression	,404	,127	0,82
Happiness	-,114	-,196	0,72

The calculated skewness, kurtosis and Cronbach alpha coefficients of the variables obtained from the normality and reliability test analysis are reported in Table 1. The data were normally distributed as the skewness and kurtosis were within the recommended ranges of .404 - .127 for the aggression scale and -.114 - (-.196) for the happiness scale, respectively (Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S., 2013). Cronbach's alpha (α) values were 0.82 for the aggression scale and 0.72 for the Oxford happiness scale.

Table 2. Anova Test results on parents' perceptions of aggression and happiness according to the number of children

Scales	Number of Children	N	Mean	df	F (4,149)	p
Aggression	1	19	2,42	4	1,275	0,28
	2	60	2,57			
	3	51	2,59			
	4	16	2,57			
	5	4	2,29			
Happiness	1	19	4,03	4	3,143	0,01
	2	60	3,74			
	3	51	3,71			
	4	16	4,02			
	5	4	3,50			

N= Number of samples, df= degree of freedom, p= significance level, $p < 0.05$

According to Table 2, while there is no significant difference between the number of children and the perceptions of aggression, there is a significant difference between the perceptions of happiness ($p < 0.05$, $F(4,149) = 3.143$). As a result of the

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analysis, it was determined that the difference between parents with one child and parents with 5 children was in favor of parents with one child.

Table 3. Anova Test results on parents' perceptions of aggression and happiness according to the variable of duration of marriage

Scales	Length of Staying Married	N	Mean	df	F (3,149)	p
Aggression	1-9 years	29	2,60	3	,251	0,86
	10-19 years	80	2,53			
	20-29 years	36	2,54			
	30 years and above	5	2,56			
Happiness	1-9 years	29	3,83	3	,597	0,61
	10-19 years	80	3,81			
	20-29 years	36	3,74			
	30 years and above	5	3,57			

N= Number of samples, df= degree of freedom, p= significance level

There is no significant difference between parents' perceptions of aggression and happiness with the variable of their length of marriage ($p > 0.05$, $F(3,149) = ,251-,597$). When the rank averages were analyzed, the averages of the parents who had been married for 1-9 years were higher than those of the parents who had been married for 10-19 years, 20-29 years, and 30 years or more (See Table 3).

Table 4. Anova Test results on perceptions of aggression and happiness according to parents' income level variable

Scales	Income Level	N	Mean	df	F (2,149)	p
Aggression	0-17.002 TL	18	2,44	2	1,355	0,26
	17.003-39.999 TL	86	2,54			
	40.000 TL and above	46	2,60			
Happiness	0-17.002 TL	18	4,03	2	2,721	0,69
	17.003-39.999 TL	86	3,77			
	40.000 TL and above	46	3,74			

N= Number of samples, df= degree of freedom, χ^2 = Chi squared, p= significance level, TL= turkish lira

In Table 4, there is no significant difference between parents' income level variable and their perceptions of aggression and happiness ($p > 0.05$, $F(2,149) = 1,355-2,721$). Looking at the rank averages, it was determined that the aggression levels of parents with an income of 40,000 TL and above and the happiness levels of parents with an income of 0-17002 TL were higher.

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Table 5. Anova Test results regarding parents' perceptions of aggression and happiness according to the sport branch their children are interested in

Scales	Sports branch that the child is interested in	N	Mean	df	F (2,149)	p
Aggression	No	58	2,51	2	,533	0,58
	Combat Sport	39	2,59			
	Athletics	53	2,56			
Happiness	No	58	3,79	2	4,479	0,01
	Combat Sport	39	3,62			
	Athletics	53	3,92			

N= Number of samples, df= degree of freedom, χ^2 = Chi squared, p= significance level

According to Table 5, there is no significant difference between parents' perceptions of aggression and the sport branch their children are interested in. Looking at the rank averages, it was revealed that the aggression levels of the parents of children who were interested in combat sports were higher. There was a significant difference between parents' perceptions of happiness and the sport branch their children were interested in ($p > 0.05$, $F(2,149) = ,533$ - $p < 0.05$, $F(2,149) = 4,479$). The difference between the parents of the children interested in athletics and the parents of the children interested in fighting was in favor of the parents of the children interested in athletics.

In Table 6, Spearman correlation analysis was performed to determine whether there is a significant relationship between parents' aggression and happiness levels. As a result of the analysis, it is seen that there is a negative and low level significant relationship between aggression and happiness scores (Spearman $R = -,136$; $p = 0,000 < 0,05$).

Scales		Scales	
		Aggression	Happiness
Aggression	r	1	-,136*
	p		,04
Happiness	r		1
	p		

Table 6. Spearman Correlation Analysis Results between Aggression and Happiness scales

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Discussion, conclusion and recommendations

In this study, aggression and happiness levels of parents of children aged 8-11 years were tested. As in similar studies in the literature (Akdoğan & Yalçın, 2018), a significant negative relationship was found between the aggressive behaviors of happy parents. According to the findings, it can be said that aggressive behaviors will decrease with the increase in the feelings of happiness experienced by parents. This can be explained as the suppression of negative emotions as a result of the effect of happiness on individuals and the prevention of possible aggressive behaviors. These behaviors of parents affect children in every way. In this context, according to these results, they direct their children to different sports branches.

In a study conducted by Küçükköse (2015) on high school students, a negative and moderately significant relationship was found between subjective well-being, another expression of happiness, and anger control expression styles, which constitute the emotional dimension of aggression. In a study conducted by Özdevecioğlu, et. al., (2013) on adults working in industrial zones, it was concluded that individuals' positive emotions reduce their individual aggression and thus reduce aggression at the organizational level. These results partially support the findings of the study.

When the literature is examined, there are studies showing that other concepts of the positive psychology movement other than happiness are negatively related to aggression. For example, studies have found that life satisfaction is a factor affecting the decrease in aggression behavior (Valois et. al., 2001). In addition, there are studies showing that subjective well-being is negatively related to aggression (Kaukiainen et al., 2001). These results obtained with different positive psychology concepts partially support the findings of our study.

It was found that the happiness levels of the parents differed significantly according to the number of children and the sport branch in which the child was interested. It was determined that parents with one child were happier. Erkoç et al. (2021) found that psychological well-being differed according to the number of children and those with 4 or more children had higher levels of psychological well-being than other groups. Researchers have found that sport has positive effects on well-being,

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including reduced aggression and increased happiness. This is partially in line with our study (Cabrera & Silva, 2024; Thompson & Jenkins 2023; Miller & Chen, 2022; Karataş et al., 2019; Izzo et. al., 2022).

It was found that the aggression levels of the parents did not show a significant difference according to some demographic variables (number of children, duration of marriage, income level) and the sport branch that the child is interested in. In the study conducted by Simsıkı & Şendil (2014), it was observed that the psychological resilience levels of parents decreased as the number of children increased. Esentürk (2014) found that there was no significant difference between family income levels and aggression levels of athletes. Yurttaş (2016) found that there was a significant difference between the income status of individuals and their aggression levels. And it was determined that the aggression levels of the parents of children interested in martial arts were higher. Gürer & Karakuzulu (2023) concluded in their study that children who are engaged in defense and martial arts are more aggressive than children who are interested in other individual sports. In this context, there are partial similarities or opposite opinions between our study and the results of the studies in the literature.

When the happiness levels of the parents were analyzed, it was concluded that there was no significant difference according to the duration of marriage and family income level. Similarly, Kasser et. al. (2004) and Çelik (2016) found that there was no significant difference between psychological well-being and happiness and socioeconomic characteristics. The results of our study are in line with the findings of similar studies. İsgör (2017) found a significant difference between psychological well-being and socioeconomic characteristics. This result is contrary to the findings of our study. While low-income parents are expected to have lower levels of happiness, it can be interpreted that they encourage themselves to be happy due to the difficulties experienced.

Based on the contribution of the study to the field, it is thought that stating that parents' aggression and happiness levels have an effect on children's choice of sports branches will change parents' perspectives on this issue and increase the importance of this issue. In addition to its contributions to the literature, the study also has limitations.

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One of these limitations is that the study group consists only of parents aged 8-11 years in Osmaniye province in Turkey. For this reason, in future studies, expanding the research data to include parents in different cities can make significant contributions to the development of the research. Some suggestions can be made in the light of the information obtained from our study.

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