

Evaluation of Alexithymia Level in Individuals Who Do Sports or Not According To Some Variables

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study to evaluate of alexithymia level in individuals who do recreative sports or not according to some variables. Data is gathered through Toronto Alexithymia Scale created by Taylor and friends in 1985. Alexithymia Scale has been translated to Turkish Language , as first time, by Dereboy in 1990. The arithmetic mean and standard deviations of the data were calculated variance analysis was used to identify whether there were any differences between groups or not; Tukey test was used for determining groups that show a difference and level of importance was taken as (0,05). According to the findings, there are significant differences of alexithymia levels on participants ($p < 0,05$). As a result, to do sports or not, genders, income levels, education level of parents are variables that significant differences has been emerged. Key words: Sports, Recreation, Alexthymia.

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INTRODUCTION

The term alexithymia was first introduced by Sifneos(Sifneos, 1973) to describe the absence of emotions and fantasies exhibited by patients with classical psychosomatic diseases, such as asthma, peptic ulcer, ulcerative colitis, and rheumatoid arthritis. It was originally hypothesized that alexithymia was a risk factor for the development of these diseases, but there has been little evidence indicating that alexithymia leads to the development of organic disease(Feldman, Lehrer, Hochron, 2002).

Alexithymia was found to be more prevalent in somatizers than in healthy subjects(Shipko,1982), positively correlated with depression(Honkalampi, Hintika, Tanskanen, Lehtonen & Viinamaki, 2000), associated with personality disorder including borderline(Berenbaum, 1996) and with worse general health status(Jyvasjarvi, Joukamaa, Vaisanen, Larivaara, Kivela, 1999).

Alexithymia refers to difficulties in emotional self-regulation and is thought to be one of several possible risk factors in a variety of medical(Kauhanen, Kaplan, Cohen, Salonen, Salonen J. 1994 & Porcelli Taylor, Bagby, De Came, 1999) and psychiatric disorders(Bourke, Taylor, Parker, Bagby, 1992. & Parker, Taylor, Bagby, Acklin, 1993). Alexithymia is literally "no words for feelings" is a personality construct characterized by deficits in the cognitive processing and regulation of emotions(White, McDonnell, Gervino, 2011) Despite the limits of individuals rating their own emotional awareness deficits(Lane, Ahern, Schwartz , Kasniak, 1999 & Sifne'os, 1996)

According to Lumley and Bazydlo Affective characteristics of alexithymia include deficits in the ability to identify one's emotional state, to distinguish emotions from physical sensations, and to communicate emotions to others. Cognitive characteristics of alexithymia include a predilection for concrete, externally oriented thought, and a

lack of daydreaming, fantasy, and introspection(Lumley, Bazydlo, 2000). Given their difficulty with emotions, alexithymic individuals may find it easier to identify emotions in highrisk settings where emotions such as anxiety may be more easily identified than in other domains, e.g., personal relationships(Woodman, Huggins, Scanff, Cazenave, 2009).

It is thought that alexithymia may influence cardiovascular and other organic diseases through several physiological, behavioral, cognitive, or social pathways. For instance, Lumley et al. (Lumley, Norman, 1996) reviewed several studies showing that alexithymia was associated with negative affect, unhealthy behaviors, nonadherence to medical regimens, and social isolation (Linden, Lenz, Stossel, 1996 & Waldstein, Kauhanen Neumannm, Katzel, 2002 & Fukunishi, Sei, Morita, Rahe, 1999 & Friedlander, Lumley, Farchione, Doayl, 1997 & Nemiah, Sifneos, Apfel-Savitz, 1997 & Newton, Contrada, 1994 & Wehmer, Brejnak, Lumley, Stetner, 1995& Berenbaum, Irvin, 1996 & Haviland, Shaw, Mmurray, Cummings M, 1988 & Kauhanen, Julkunen, Salonen, 1991 & Valkamo, et all, 2001).

There is no doubt that due to its theoretical as well as clinical importance, alexithymia still warrants a great deal of empirical attention today (Larsen, Brand, Bermond,Hijman, 2003). One important issue is the relationship between alexithymia and culture(Besharat, Sharidi, 2011).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Sample Group

The sample of the research is described as 130 individuals (64 male, 66 female) who do recreative sports or not in Adana Hayal Park Leisure Centre.

Data Gathering Tool

To gather the data for the research, the demographic information forms and “Toronto Alexythimia Scale” have been used. It is an easy to implement scale which the individuals can answer by themselves. The scale has been thought to the sampling group and it has been filled by the group in accordance with the principle of voluntary participation. At what degree, the thoughts and behaviours written in the scale match with theirs, has been asked to the participants.

Statistical Analysis

The datas gathered from the participants have been evaluated with the statistics package program SPSS 17.0. The arithmetic mean and standard deviations of the data were calculated variance analysis was used to identify whether there were any differences between groups or not; Tukey test was used for determining groups that show a difference and level of importance was taken as (0,05).

FINDINGS

Table 1. Information about Demographic Features of The Participants

		N	%
Gender	Male	64	49,2
	Female	66	50,8
	Total	130	100,0
Age	20 and less	22	16,9
	21-23	11	8,5
	24-27	30	23,1
	28 and over	67	51,5
	Total	130	100,0
Places that the participants have lived for the longest period of time	County	7	5,4
	Province	53	40,8
	Metropole	70	53,8
	Total	130	100,0
Education Level	Primary School	7	5,4
	High School	57	43,8
	University	59	45,4
	Master Degree	7	5,4
	Total	130	100,0
Free time period	1 hour and less	6	4,6
	2-3 hours	32	24,6
	4-5 hours	53	40,8
	6 hours and more	39	30,0
	Total	130	100,0
Monthly Income	499 TL and less	8	6,2
	500 TL – 999 TL	18	13,8
	1000 TL – 1499 TL	29	22,3
	1500 TL – 1999 TL	34	26,2
	2000 TL and more	41	31,5
	Total	130	100,0

	Yes	96	73,8
Do you exercise regularly?	No	34	26,2
	Total	130	100,0

In Table 1 the distribution of the personal information on the participants have been given. According to the data, it can be seen that 49,2% of the students who have participated in the research are "male" and 50,8% are "female" (M=64; F=66). Four different age intervals are used. When evaluated, it can be seen that as a big mass, 51.5% of the participants are at the age "28 and over" and "21-23" aged students have been the lowest number of participants who took place in the research with a rate of %8,5. It has been determined that 53,8% of the sample group have lived in a metropole while 5,4% have lived in a county for the longest period of their life. It has been seen that %73,8 of participants exercise recreative sports regularly.

Table 2. t-test results according to gender of the participants

	Gender	N	\bar{X}	SS	t	P
Emotions	Male	64	16,62	3,39	-,327	,744
	Female	66	16,83	3,85		
Emotionally and Physically	Male	64	26,37	5,75	,998	,320
	Female	66	25,28	6,64		
Imagination, fantasy	Male	64	14,45	3,11	3,11	,309
	Female	66	14,28	2,98		
Out centered	Male	64	11,65	4,08	4,08	1,356
	Female	66	10,69	3,97		

P=0.05

A meaningful statistical difference of alexythimia points related to gender variable has not been determined in Table-2 ($p>0.05$).

Table 3 ANOVA Test results according to age of the participants

	Age	N	\bar{X}	SS	F	P	Tukey
Emotions	20 and less	22	18,31	4,53	1,750	,160	
	21-23	11	16,63	1,91			
	24-27	30	16,30	3,44			
	28 and older	67	16,41	3,50			
	Total	130	16,73	3,62			
Emotionally and Physically	20 and less	22	28,31	7,33			

	21-23	11	23,72	6,97		
	24-27	30	26,10	5,99	1,857	,140
	28 and older	67	25,22	5,67		
	Total	130	25,82	6,22		
Imagination, fantasy	20 and less	22	12,22	3,33		
	21-23	11	16,00	1,67		1-2*
	24-27	30	14,83	2,30	5,615	,001 1-3*
	28 and older	67	14,59	3,09		1-4*
	Total	130	14,36	3,03		
Out centered	20 and less	22	10,72	4,02		
	21-23	11	12,36	5,18		
	24-27	30	12,16	4,33	1,365	,257
	28 and older	67	10,67	3,66		
	Total	130	11,16	4,04		

As a result of the variance analysis which has been performed to find the differences of the alexythimia points related age variable, a meaningful difference has been found ($p > 0,05$). To find the groups which cause the difference Tukey test has been performed. According to this, meaningful differences between the participants who are at age 20-less and 21-23; 20- less and 24-27; 20- less 28 and older, have been determined ($p < 0,05$).

CONCLUSION

In this research which is thought to be an example for the researches on alexythimia and sports, the alexythimia level of the participants doing recreative sports or not, has been evaluated. According to statistical analysis, significant differences have not been found between participants' alexythimia level and their gender. This result is similar with Lumley and Bazydlo's study (Lumley, Bazydlo, 2004). On the other hand, the result of this study is not similar with the study researched by Modestin et al., 2004. Significant differences have not been found between participants' alexythimia level and their longest lived place, education level, free time period, monthly income, regularly exercise situation according to statistical analysis. Individuals have different emotions in their daily life and introduce their feelings verbally or somehow. They use different words and phrases when they introduce these feelings. There are different ways for individuals to understand and transfer their own feelings to others. In this case, individuals may have problems to communicate with others and may be thought as inscrutable. Recreational sports may be thought as an useful element to feel more comfortable to introduce feelings for individuals. Individuals, doing recreative sports, may be more self-confident when they communicate with others. In this study, significant difference between individuals who do recreative sports or not has not been found.

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