

EXAMINING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SPORTS SCIENCES FACULTY STUDENTS: THE CASE OF FIRAT UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The most emphasised aspect of teaching is student achievement. It is the reason for teaching and the product teaching produces. The potential of a well-qualified workforce with high academic achievement is thought to be the primary factor in the development of a society. This study was designed to examine the academic achievement of students studying at the Sports Sciences Faculty of Fırat University in terms of a set of variables. The entire population was included, and the study was conducted with 684 students (80.1%). A questionnaire developed by the researchers was used as the data-gathering instrument. The data were evaluated using a statistical package program, and presented as frequency, percentage and means. The Kruskal Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests were used to analyse the data. This research found that there was a significant relationship between the students' academic achievement scores and their age, gender, mothers' state of employment, place of residence, departments, year of study and type of education ($p < 0.05$).

Keywords: Achievement, Academic Achievement, Students, Sports Sciences

Introduction

Student achievement is at the centre of education. Achievement is the concept that comes to one's mind first with regard to school life and education. For this reason, the most emphasised aspect of teaching practices is student achievement as their product. The differing academic achievement levels of students in the same teaching program is one of the issues most studied by educators (Arıcı, 2008). In the studies conducted in the field of education, the aim is to investigate how student achievement can be enhanced, determine how education can be improved, look for the reasons for failure, inquire how they can be eliminated and create the ideal education system. In this way, students' cognitive and affective development is ensured (Morgil & Seçken).

Achievement is achieving the desired outcome by acting in a planned way in accordance with pre-defined goals (Baba, 2012). From the perspective of education, achievement is the result that is revealed when students demonstrate proficiency at a desired level in areas that require knowledge and certain skills, or with the positive performance of students who are administered measurement tools and a set of behaviours consistent with the program outcomes (Demirtaş & Çınar, 2004). Achievement is also an indicator of the extent to which individuals benefit from a course or an academic program (Carter & Good, 1973). What is meant by achievement in education usually corresponds to skills or knowledge acquired in courses taught at school and measured by grades and test scores (Soydan et al., 2012).

Students' high or low academic achievement is of significance for themselves, their parents and their society. The potential of a well-qualified workforce with high academic achievement is thought to be the primary factor in the development of a society. Thus, every education system identifies the human model it would like to educate based on its philosophies of education and labor policy and organises instructional activities based on this aim. Therefore, investment in education is important for the development of the society in the long term. However, problems such as academic failure, dropouts and not fulfilling potentials for various reasons prevent education from providing manpower in the desired numbers and quality to contribute to the development of society (Gündoğdu et al., 2010; Yıldırım, 2000).

Academic achievement is an important concept that affects the entire lives of young individuals. When their holistic development is supported, their cognitive and psychosocial development will be enhanced, and they will succeed (Keskin & Sezgin, 2010).

The aims of higher education include training individuals who have independent and scientific thinking skills, a broad vision of the world, show respect for human rights, are balanced in terms of body, mind, spirit, ethics and emotions, respond to the development and needs of the country based on their interests and abilities, and at the same time have the knowledge, skills, behaviours and general culture of a profession that will earn them their living and make them happy (see www.yok.gov.tr). To achieve these aims, young individuals' educational environments should support both their academic and social development.

The first step in ensuring students' achievement is identifying the factors that positively or negatively affective achievement (Şevik, 2014).

Many studies have examined the relationship between academic achievement and other variables in different student groups. In the international literature, studies have focused on the relationships between academic achievement and academic self-concept, internal motivation and test anxiety (Khalaila, 2015), between academic achievement and sleep

quality (Baert et al., 2015), between academic achievement and parental involvement (Castro et al., 2015), between academic achievement and affective intelligence (Costa, 2015), between academic achievement and cognitive and affective variables (Hamaideh et al., 2014), between age and academic achievement (Nam, 2014), and between personal characteristics and academic achievement (Cazan & Schiopca, 2014). The domestic literature includes studies of the relationships between time management skills and academic achievement (Demirtaş & Özer, 2007), between academic achievement and gender, attitudes and use of learning strategies (Özkal & Çetingöz, 2006), between academic achievement and burnout (Balkıs et al., 2012), and between academic achievement motivation and social support (Kapıkıran, 2009). However, the literature on the relationship between academic achievement in the field of sports sciences and other variables is limited.

The primary aim of this study is to examine the academic achievement levels of students studying in different departments of a sports sciences faculty. Thus, the following research questions were addressed:

Does students' academic achievement significantly differ based on age, gender, parents' education level, type of high school graduated, place of residence and financial status?

Does students' academic achievement significantly vary by department, year of study and type of education?

Materials and Methods

This study adopted a descriptive design. The population of the study consisted of 854 students in the departments of physical education teaching, sports management and coaching at the Sports Sciences Faculty of Fırat University in the fall term of the 2014-2015 academic year. Without selecting a sample, the entire population was included, and the study was completed with 684 students who agreed to participate. The inclusiveness rate of the study was 80.1%. A personal information form developed by the researchers was used as the data-gathering instrument. This form asked about demographic characteristics such as students' age, gender, department, year of study, academic achievement, parents' education level and parents' profession. The students' academic grade point average was used as the criterion for academic achievement. The form was distributed to students in their classrooms after the necessary instructions were provided, and they filled out the form under supervision. The data were evaluated with a statistical package program, and presented as frequencies, percentages and means. The Kruskal Wallis test was used in the analysis since the parametric test assumptions were not met, and Mann-Whitney U was used for comparisons. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used.

Results

The average age of the students who participated in the study was 21.8 ± 2.7 . The distribution of their other demographic characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of students' demographic characteristics

Characteristics	Number	%
Age		
19 years old or younger	125	18.3
20-23 years old	407	59.5
24 years old or older	152	22.2
Gender		
Female	245	35.8
Male	439	64.2
Department		
Physical Education and Sports Teaching	155	22.7
Sports Management	242	35.4
Coaching	287	42.0
Year		
Freshman	166	24.3
Sophomore	177	25.9
Junior	167	24.4
Senior	174	25.4
Type of Education		
Daytime education	418	61.1
Evening education	266	38.9
Type of High School Graduated		
Normal high school	438	64.0
Vocational high school	100	14.6
Sports high school	82	12.0
Anatolian, Science, and Foreign Language Intensive high schools	64	9.4

Of the students 59.5% were aged between 20-23, 64.2% were male, 42.0% were studying in the coaching department, 61.1% were in daytime education and 64.0% were graduates of a normal high school.

Of the mothers, 45.9% were elementary school graduates, while 14.5% of fathers did not complete their elementary school education. Of the mothers, 95% were housewives, while 57.1% of fathers were working at a job. Of the 64.0% of the students who were from a nuclear family, 78.1% reported their financial status as intermediate, and 78.1% lived in cities.

Table 2. Distribution of students' academic achievement grades based on age, departments and year of study

Variables		N	Rank Mean	SD	X ² -KW	P
Age	19 years old and younger	125	306.86	2	8.57	0.014
	20-23 years old	407	337.21			
	24 years old and older	147	375.89			
Department	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	154	398.98	2	18.19	0.000
	Sports Management	242	326.52			
	Coaching	283	319.43			
Year	Freshman	165	281.16	3	108.31	0.000
	Sophomore	173	247.92			
	Junior	167	390.54			
	Senior	174	438.84			

When the distribution of the students' academic achievement was examined based on age group, the grades of students aged 24 and older were significantly higher ($p < 0.05$, see Table 2). The academic achievement grades of students in the department of physical education and sports teaching were found to be higher than those studying in the other departments ($p < 0.05$, see Table 2), and the academic achievement grades of senior students were the highest ($p < 0.05$, see Table 2).

Table 3. Distribution of students' academic achievement grades based on gender, type of education, mothers' employment status and place of residence

Variables		N	Order Mean	U	P
Gender	Female	245	361.61	47871.00	0.031
	Male	434	327.80		
Type of Education	Daytime education	416	372.30	41267.50	0.000
	Evening education	263	288.91		
Mothers' employment status	Working	34	418.46	8297.50	0.017
	Not working	645	335.86		
Place of residence	Village-town	191	311.02	41068.00	0.018
	City	487	350.67		

The students' academic achievement was examined by gender, and the female students' grades were found to be significantly higher than those of the male students ($p < 0.05$, see Table 3). The academic achievement of the students in daytime education were higher than those in evening education ($p < 0.05$, see Table 3). The students whose mothers were working had significantly higher grades than those whose mothers were not working ($p < 0.05$, see Table 3).

The students' grades were also compared based on their place of residence, and those living in the cities were found to have significantly higher grades than others ($p < 0.05$, see Table 3).

On the other hand, no significant relationships were found between the students' academic achievement grades and their parents' education level, the type of high school they attended, their perceived financial status and family type ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion

In this section, the study's findings revealed are discussed in the light of the literature. The average age of the students who participated in the study was 21.8 ± 2.7 . In the study by Erşan et al. (2009), the students' average age was 22.38 ± 2.1 , while in Sözen's (2012) study it was 23.6 ± 3.7 .

More than half of the students (64.2%) in the study were male (see Table 1). The studies of Filiz (2004), Hergüner et al. (2002), Avşar and Kuter (2007), and Yalız and Erişti (2009) were consistent with this result.

In this study, the students studying in the coaching department were in the majority. In the study of Turgut et al. (2004), the majority of the students were also in the coaching department.

Regarding the distribution of the students based on year of study, the numbers of students were close to each other (see Table 1). Of the students, 24.3% were freshmen, 25.9% were sophomores, 24.4% were juniors, and 25.4% were seniors. In the study by Buğdaycı et al. (2003) of physical education and sports students from the provinces of Mersin, Adana and Hatay, 27.7% of the students were freshmen, 29.1% were sophomores, 16.7% were juniors, and 26.2% were seniors.

Most of the students who participated in the study stated that they lived in cities. In Türkçapar's study (2009), 80% of physical education students also said that they lived in the cities.

The study revealed that as the students' age increased, their academic grades went up, and this was a statistically significant difference (see Table 2). Similarly, in Yaşar's study (2013), a significant relationship was found between age and academic achievement. Unlike our finding, Doğan (1996) found no significant difference between age and academic achievement.

The study also revealed that the students' academic achievement differed significantly based on their departments (see Table 2). Students from the physical education and sports teaching department had the highest grades, and were followed by sports management and coaching students. This finding is unlike those in the literature. In the studies of Altunbaş (2006) and Asiabi (2012), no significant relationship was found between academic achievement and department.

When the students' academic achievement was examined by year of study, a significant difference was found, and seniors had the highest academic achievement (see Table 2). Similarly, in Gürleyük's (2008) and Alver's (2005) studies, seniors' academic achievement grades were found to be significantly higher than other years. On the other hand, Altunbaş (2006) found that academic achievement did not vary by year of study.

Female students were found to have higher academic achievement than the male students, and this difference was significant (see Table 3). The studies of Gürleyük (2008), Emre (2002), Çırpan (2013), Alver (2005), Baba (2012) and Göçer (2014) all reached similar conclusions which support our finding. However, the studies of Başoğlu (2001), Doğan (1996), Ergül (2003), Alay and Koçak (2003) did not find a significant relationship between gender and academic achievement.

When the academic achievement grades were compared based on type of education, a significant difference was found. The students in daytime education had higher grades than those in evening education (see Table 3). The studies in the literature report different findings. In Alver's study (2005), students in evening education had higher academic achievement grades. On the other hand, in Çırpan's study (2013), no significant difference was found between type of education and academic achievement.

Regarding place of residence, the students living in cities were found to have significantly higher academic achievement grades (see Table 3). In the studies of Altunbaş (2006) and Asiabi (2005), no significant relationship was found between academic achievement and place of residence.

The students' academic achievement did not show a significant by maternal education level. Unlike this study, Pınar (1999) found a significant relationship between mothers' education level and students' academic achievement.

The types of high schools the students attended were compared in terms of academic achievement, and no significant relationship was found. In this respect, Çırpan's study (2013) supports our study. However, in Emre's study (2002), the students who had graduated from vocational high schools, foreign language intensive high schools, Anatolian high schools and science high schools were found to be more successful than the graduates of other types of high school.

In this study, no significant relationship was found between how the students perceived their financial status and their academic achievement. This finding is consistent with the studies of Altunbaş (2006), Alver (2005) and Gürleyük (2008).

In this study, the academic achievement of Sports Sciences Faculty students was examined in relation to a set of variables, and it was found that as their ages increased, the students' academic achievement rose. Their academic achievement scores significantly differed based on departments, and the students from the department of physical education and sports teaching were more successful than other departments. Seniors were more successful than students in other years. Day students did better than evening education students, and the students who live in cities had higher scores than those who live in villages and towns.

To enhance the academic achievement of young individuals who will have a place in the work life of the future and train them as active individuals, it can be suggested that students should be informed about effective studying strategies, their learning styles should be determined by educators and they should be guided accordingly. Methods that motivate students to be successful should be identified, success should be rewarded, students should be monitored and supported by their supervisors and studies that examine the relationship of academic achievement using a variety of parameters should be conducted.

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