

# The analysis of social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates in terms of different variables

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates based on different variables. Participated in the current study 600 physical education teacher candidates studying at physical education and sports departments which were designed using a screening model. As a data collection tool, the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale was used in the study. In the data analysis process, as well as the descriptive statistics, a t-test for independent groups, one-way variance analysis, and Pearson correlation coefficient technique were used. The study results suggest that the social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates were low. Although no meaningful relationship was found between the social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates and their gender and income level variables, there was a significant difference based on their sports branches. Additionally, there was a meaningful difference found between age and social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Sports, physical education teacher, social appearance anxiety, social anxiety, teacher candidate.

## INTRODUCTION

It is thought that, as a social, psychological, cultural and biological being, humans' need for socialization stems from their nature. The relationships one establishes with his surrounding environments and the quality of these relationships influence his socialization process considerably.

However, in the socialization process, individuals' impressions about one another are also significant. Thus, humans strive to leave an impression on one another. Many people are disposed to interacting with attractive individuals who would evoke admiration (42).

The negative experiences, discontent and detentions individuals may experience in this socialization process not only affect this process in a negative way, but may also cause anxiety (10,32). This anxiety may manifest itself when speaking public, meeting a new person or talking to a figure of authority. Occasionally, even thinking about such circumstances may cause anxiety. It is claimed

that a person experiencing such emotions has social anxiety (10).

Social anxiety is related to individuals' interpersonal relations and cognitive states. Individuals' thoughts and feelings towards their social interactions stem from their cognitive, affective and motivational constructs (8). Dilbaz defines social anxiety as a constant fear of being criticized by others owing to more than one situation and of humiliation or embarrassment (17). Individuals feel social anxiety mostly due to imaginary situations rather than real ones. Hypothetical situations raise anxiety in individuals. The prominent difference between social anxiety and other types of anxieties is that it takes its roots from interpersonal experiences (29). Another type of anxiety related to individuals' social anxiety is social appearance anxiety.

While individuals care about their own physical appearances, they also care about other peoples' physical appearances. The thought that others do the same thing as them raises anxiety in

individuals (7). This type of anxiety, which is directly related to how individuals perceive their bodies Cash et al. (13) is described as social appearance anxiety. Doğan deals with social appearance anxiety as a result of an individual being assessed based on their appearance (18). According to Hart et al., social appearance anxiety is a more detailed and general term which takes into account an individual's general physical appearance like height, weight and muscle structure (23). It also includes body perceptions such as individual's skin color and face shape (the shape of nose, the distance between eyes, his/her smile etc.). In general, social appearance anxiety can be accepted as the result of an individual's negative body image (32). The individuals with social appearance anxiety are observed to show less sincere and less intimate behaviors due to the possibility of being rejected by others (1).

The body image of the individuals who possess an integrative construct physically, mentally and socially also affects this integrity. The term "body image" refers to an individual's perceptions, attitudes and behaviors towards his own body, and his experiences expanding from the past to today (14). Individuals with high levels of social anxiety are generally disposed to comparing themselves with other people, and to perceive their appearances as more negative relative to others (30). It is also asserted that individuals with high perfectionism influence social appearance anxiety, and that social appearance anxiety is related with neurotics (24).

In literature, there has been seen a social physique anxiety (9,15,34,35). However, social physique anxiety deals with the anxieties individuals feel when their physical appearances are assessed by others, as agitation (22), while social appearance anxiety is seen to be a more extensive term including body perceptions such as an individual's skin color and face shape (the shape of nose, the distance between eyes, his smile etc.) as well as an individual's general physical appearance like height, weight and muscle structure (19,23). In this sense, it can be inferred that social appearance anxiety is a more general term and associated with individuals' body images.

The researchers have also examined the relationship between individuals' perceptions, emotional attitudes and anxieties towards their physical appearances, and their habits concerning regular physical activity and exercise

(4,5,6,33). Some study results show that individuals playing sports possess a more positive body image than those who do not (6,15,31). In other studies conducted on this topic, the social appearance anxiety levels of teacher candidates and physical education teacher candidates were determined (39,41). Additionally, there have been studies for developing scales and adaptations with the aim of measuring the social appearance anxiety of different samples such as for university students and adolescents (19,20,28). There have been also researches that examine social appearance anxiety with different variables such as self-esteem, self-regard, depression, anxiety and loneliness (3,32,38).

An individual's developmental task and possible stress sources might disrupt the development of a positive body image, and increase social appearance anxiety. Positive body image is of vital importance for raising healthy generations. A positive body image influences individuals' life quality, achievements and interpersonal relations. On the other hand, a negative body image would result in depression, eating disorders, social anxiety, and as a result of these, social appearance anxiety would manifest. With the aim of ensuring physical education teacher candidates' chances to be more healthy, productive and happy, it is required to determine their social appearance anxiety levels and the underlying factors. In this sense, the aim of this study is to determine the social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates.

## MATERIALS & METHOD

### Model

This study is a general screening model research conducted to test whether the social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates would differ in terms of different variables. General screening models target a specific population of a study or a group or sample taken out of that target population so as to reach a general judgment about that population which can be consisted of a number of elements. Relational screening models aim to determine the existence or the level of change between two or more variables (25).

### Study Sample

The sample of this study consists of 600 physical education teacher candidates (236 females (39.3%); 364 males 60.7%) studying at 6 physical

education and sports departments at different universities in the 2011-2012 education term. The average age of the participant physical education teacher candidates was measured as a minimum of 17, and a maximum of 33 (Age=  $22.18 \pm 2.24$ ; min. = 17-max. = 33)

The participants were chosen via random sampling method, which ensures equal selection rights to every sample and includes the chosen ones in the sample (16).

### Data Collection Tools

With the aim of gathering the study data, the Personal Information Form and the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale were used.

The *Personal Information Form* was designed by the researchers in order to collect personal data about the participant physical education teacher candidates. There are variables which are thought affect social appearance anxiety level in the tool. The participants were asked questions related to their gender, sports branch, family income level and age.

The *Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS)* was used to determine the social appearance anxiety levels of the participant physical education teacher candidates. The instrument was developed by Hart et al. (2008), and it is a self-reporting scale which aims to measure affective, cognitive and behavioral anxieties individuals experience concerning their appearance (23). The adaptation into Turkish, validity and reliability studies of the scale were conducted by Doğan (19).

The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS) is a 5-point Likert scale consisting of 16 items. The scales' items range from 1 (Definitely Inappropriate) to 5 (Definitely Appropriate). The first item of the scale is reverse coded. The high scores obtained from the scale which measures social appearance anxiety level based on one-dimension indicates high levels of social appearance anxiety. The validity and reliability studies of the scale were conducted over three different samples consisting of university students. With the first sample (512 agents), the exploratory factor analysis (EFA); and with the second sample (853 agents) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were conducted. With the data from the third sample (541 agents), the convergent validity and test-retest reliability values were measured. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale based on

three samples were found to be .94, .95 and .94, respectively. The test-retest reliability coefficient, which was obtained by implementing the scale twice with a one-month gap in between tests, was found to be .84.

The validity and reliability studies of the scale for the current study proved that the scale still maintains its original item and factor constructs. In addition, the internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) of the scale was measured as .86. From this, it is concluded that the scale is a valid and reliable assessment instrument for the current study.

### Data Analysis

In the first phase of the study, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine if the study data had normal distribution. After it was confirmed that the data had a normal distribution, parametric tests were conducted. Statistical analysis such as percent and frequency was used in the study in order to analyze the data related to the demographic features of the participant physical education teacher candidates. With the aim of determining the physical appearance anxiety levels of the participants, "arithmetic average" and "standard deviation" techniques were used. Additionally, in order to see the social appearance anxiety levels of the participants based on gender and sports branch variables, independent groups' t-test was conducted. One-way variance analysis (Anova) was applied to determine the social appearance anxiety levels of the participants' base on income level. Also, with the aim of reviewing the relationships between social appearance anxiety levels and ages of the participants, the Pearson correlation test was implemented. SPSS 15.00 packet program was used in data analysis. The significance value was accepted as .05 in the study.

### RESULTS

In this part of the study, the descriptions of the social anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates are presented along with its comparisons with gender, sports branch and family income, and its relationship to age.

The average score of the participant physical education teacher candidates from the social appearance anxiety scale was measured as  $M=2.03 \pm .846$ . From this, it can be inferred that the participant physical education teacher candidates had low levels of social appearance anxiety.

With the aim of determining social anxiety levels of the participants based on gender, independent groups t-test was applied, and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 presents the comparisons of the social appearance anxiety levels of the participant physical education teachers based on gender. No significant differences were found in their social appearance anxiety levels.

With the aim of determining the social appearance anxiety levels of the participants in terms of their sports branch, independent groups t-test was applied, and the test results are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 demonstrates the comparison of the social appearance anxiety levels of the participant physical education teacher candidates in terms of sports branch. The result suggests a meaningful difference in their social appearance anxiety levels based on their sport branch. The participant physical education teacher candidates who are interested in individual sports possess a higher level of social appearance anxiety.

Table 1. The comparisons of social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates in terms of gender.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Female	236	.99	.860	598	-	.365
Male	364	.06	.838		.907	

Table 2. Comparisons of the social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates in terms of sports branch.

Sports Branch	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Team Sports	373	2.01	.868	598	2.055	.040
Individual Sports	227	2.26	.811			

\* p<0.05

One-way variance analysis (One-Way-Anova) was conducted in order to determine the social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates in terms of income level. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 presents the comparisons of the social appearance anxiety levels of the participant physical education teacher candidates based on their income level. No significant differences were found in their social anxiety levels in terms of income level.

The Pearson correlation test was applied to determine the relationship between the social appearance anxiety levels and ages of the participant physical education teacher candidates. Table 4 includes the test results below.

Table 3. Comparisons of social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates in terms of income level.

Income Level	N	Mean	SD	df	F	p
0-500	216	2.03	.792	4	2.354	.053
501-1000	227	2.00	.877	595		
1001-1500	70	2.02	.837	599		
1501-2000	51	1.93	.810			
2001 and more	36	2.43	.967			
Total	600	2.03	.846			

Table 4. Comparisons of social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates in terms of age.

Variables	Age	Social Appearance Anxiety
Pearson Correlation	1	.081*
P		.047

p<0.05\*

## DISCUSSION

In this part of the paper, the study results are discussed accompanied by the related findings in the literature.

In a general overview of the social appearance anxiety scale average scores of the participant physical education teacher candidates, they were found to have low levels of social appearance anxiety levels. A similar result was also reached in the research conducted by Yaşartürk et al. (2014), in which the students studying at the school of physical education and sports possessed low social appearance anxiety levels (41). Another similar study by Alemdağ & Öncü (2) revealed the same results among the physical education teacher candidates. In researches conducted concerning individuals' social appearance anxieties, Carleton et al. (12) emphasized that social appearance anxiety especially stemmed from individuals' worries about being humiliated or negatively judged by others.

Spokas et al. (36) stated that social anxiety covers individuals' fears of being constantly assessed negatively by others. Additionally, another study taking into account both social anxiety disorders and cognitive processes, suggests that individuals with social anxiety tend to focus on negative types around them more often than others, tend to evaluate their external stimuli negatively,

and remember negative memories in the past faster than other (18).

According to cognitive theorists, the core of social appearance anxiety lies in the anxiety of being criticized. This criticism creates anxiety in individuals whether it is positive or negative (40). In other words, social anxiety levels appear when individuals think that they are likely to be assessed by others in social settings or in situations in which individuals are expected to perform. This results in individuals feeling afraid of being ashamed or embarrassed and of others realizing it. Individuals inherently feel anxiety and fear in such negative assessment situations. Considering the same situation in sports environments or from the perspective of physical education teachers, they are always in front of a group of people during physical and sports activities, which in turn possesses significant importance for sports activities and physical education teachers. In this sense, according to the study results, it can be said that the claim that the individuals with high social appearance anxiety levels experience high levels of fears of being criticized, does not apply to physical education teacher candidates. The findings of Aşçı (6), who asserted that individuals actively engaging in sports had more positive physical perceptions of themselves compared to those who do not play sports regularly, support the findings of this study.

In this study, the social appearance anxiety levels of the participant physical education teachers candidates were compared in terms of their gender. The results suggest no meaningful difference between social appearance anxiety levels in terms of gender.

In his study with university students, Gümüş (21) also found out no statistically significant differences in social anxieties of both male and female students, which again supports the findings of the current study. However, in another study it was revealed that males experience more anxiety than females (27). In addition, another study examining the satisfaction levels of university dancers with their body images and social physical anxieties, meaningful differences were found in both males and females' body image satisfaction levels. Accordingly, females were found to feel more discomfort with their physical appearance than males. In other words, they possessed more negative feelings towards their physical appearances (15).

In different researches conducted on the satisfaction levels of women who do and do not play sports in terms of their physical appearance anxiety and body images, it was indicated that women playing sports regularly have more positive perceptions towards their own bodies than those who do not, and participation in sports affects individuals' attitudes, emotions and behaviors towards their own bodies in a positive way. Also, this underlines that sports increases positive body images, and decreases social physical appearance anxiety (11,31).

That the social appearance anxiety levels of the physical education teacher candidates from both genders show similarities can be explained as that both genders are interested in sports and their feeling of satisfaction towards their own bodies reflects on their social appearance anxiety.

Another outcome reached in this study is about the relationship between social appearance anxiety levels and sports branches of the physical education teacher candidates. In this sense, there were meaningful differences in their social appearance anxiety levels based on their sports branch. Through this, it is confirmed that the athletes playing individual sports have higher levels of social appearance anxiety than those participating in team sports.

Various studies have proven that the individuals playing sports are more satisfied with their body images than those who do not (6,31). According to Koparan et al. (26), there were not any meaningful differences in the social physical appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates based on their gender, which does not parallel the current study's results.

Individual and team sports show differences in themselves. In individual sports, mostly individual features of the athlete become prominent, and the responsibility is generally on the athlete. The sense of being the focus of attention during the activity may result in anxiety in the individual. On the other hand, the responsibility and performance in team sports are shared with a group of people. The individuals playing team sports sense that they are not the focus of interest during the activity. This may result in individuals' experiencing less anxiety. Thus, it can be inferred that the physical education teacher candidates playing team sports possess lower social appearance anxiety levels, which also supports the study findings.

This study also examined the relationship between family income level and social appearance anxiety levels of teacher candidates. The results suggested no meaningful differences in these variables.

In a study by Stein et al. (37), it was found that individuals with social anxiety generally have a low income. Here, it is emphasized that individuals with low financial status possess higher level of anxiety while those with higher economic status show less social anxiety. Özcan et al. (32) found a negative relationship between income level and social appearance anxiety. From this, it is claimed that higher income levels show protective features on psychopathology that lower income individuals have a tendency to psychopathology, and that in this sense, possessing a medium level of income would affect an individual's mental health in a positive way.

Appearance is not an acquired characteristic. It is a heredity concept which comes from birth and is generally not under the control of individuals in the later stages of development. Thus, in light of the fact that economic freedom or income level would not change this innate feature-appearance, it can be concluded that it is impossible for income level to affect social appearance anxiety directly.

This study examined the relationships between ages and social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates. In this context, there was found a low but positive relationship between the variables. Similarly, Sabiston et al. (34) emphasized age as being one of the factors influencing social appearance anxiety. However, in their study with university students, Koparan et al. (26) did not detect any meaningful difference in social appearance anxiety and age. So, it can be inferred that there have been various opinions and findings in the literature about the relationship between age and social appearance anxiety.

That there is a low but positive relationship between the ages and social appearance anxiety levels of physical education teacher candidates shows that age is an important factor in anxiety levels. However based on the low correlation values, it can also be concluded that age does not affect social appearance anxiety that much.

As a conclusion, this study examined the social appearance anxiety levels of the participant physical education teacher candidates based on

gender, sports branch, family income level and age. In the following studies, the comparisons between physical education teachers and different branch teachers can be examined in terms of their social appearance anxiety levels. Additionally, the social appearance anxiety levels can be investigated based on psychological features like self-esteem, loneliness and depression through considering variables like physical activity levels, body image and malnutrition. Also, the factors affecting social appearance anxiety can be determined and addressed.

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