Achievement goals in Turkish high school PE setting: The predicting role of social physique anxiety

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

The objectives of this study were to determine high school students' achievement goals and social physique anxiety level according to gender and grade level and to examine the role of social physique anxiety in predicting achievement goals. Participants consisted of 1359 female and 1286 male high school students from central Turkey. The results showed that females obtained higher scores on mastery and performance avoidance achievement goals and social physique anxiety, 10th-grade students obtained higher scores on mastery achievement goals, 9th- and 10th-grade students obtained higher scores than students in other grades on performance approach achievement goals, 9th- and 10th-grade students obtained higher scores than students in other grades on performance avoidance achievement goals, and 9th-grade students obtained higher scores than 11th-grade students on social physique anxiety. Furthermore, social physique anxiety was found to be a positive predictor of performance avoidance achievement goals in physical education.

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1. Introduction

Many adolescents become preoccupied with their body appearance and attractiveness as a result of physical changes during puberty. Physical changes in size, weight, strength, or looks can cause children to be accepted or rejected in social and athletic contexts because of peers', classmates', teachers', and coaches' disturbing behaviours related to their physical appearance (VanderVelde, 1985) and attraction. The importance of appearing physically attractive in front of one's peers during adolescence linked with a focus on physical performance makes high school physical education (PE) classes a likely place to observe individuals who may be suffering with body-related anxiety (Cox, Ullrich-French, Madonia, & Witty, 2011). On the other hand, students' displaying their competence in front of their peers while exceeding standards and performance evaluations that are overt and obvious (Duda, 1993) in PE can be related to perceptions of rivalry, which is one of the key components of achievement goals. Achievement goals play an important role in cognitive, affective, social, and behavioural development in youth PE. Therefore, PE environments are critical to the development of girls' and boys' positive and negative feelings, attitudes towards their bodies, physical activity (Koca & Aşçı, 2006), and their achievement goals.

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1.1. Achievement goals

Achievement motivation in general and achievement goals in particular are important areas of inquiry because the desire for competence is fundamental and basic to the human psyche (White, 1959). Achievement motivation may be defined as the energisation and direction of competence-based affect, cognition, and behaviour (Elliot, 1999). Achievement goals are the proximal predictors of achievement-relevant processes and outcomes, and these goals serve their underlying desires, concerns, needs, and motives, which may be viewed as the distal predictors of achievement-relevant processes and outcomes (Elliot & Thrash, 2001). People judge their competence and define successful accomplishment via at least two different goal perspectives (Nicholls, 1989). According to the Dichotomous Model (Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984), ego/performance goals represent the state in which individuals seek to demonstrate ability in the differentiated sense, whereas task/mastery goals represent the state in which individuals seek to demonstrate ability in a less differentiated sense. For performance-goal-driven children, satisfaction with outcomes is based on the ability such children believe they have displayed, whereas with a mastery goal, children are willing to risk displays of ignorance to acquire skills and knowledge. Instead of calculating their exact ability level and how it will be judged, they can think more about the value of the skill to be developed or their interest in the task to be undertaken; they see more effort as leading to more mastery and higher ability (Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984).

In the late 1990s, Elliot and his colleagues (Elliot & Church, 1997; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996) proposed the Trichotomous Model, which distinguishes categorises goals into performance-approach and performance-voidance goals, whereas the mastery goal construct remains the same. In essence, the mastery goal focuses on the development of competence and task mastery (an approach orientation), a performance-approach goal directed towards attaining favourable judgments of competence (also an approach orientation), and a performance-avoidance goal aimed at avoiding unfavourable judgments of competence (an avoidance orientation).

Although a mastery goal is related to interest, the goal represents a focus on learning and self-improvement and outcomes, and although study results obtained in this area of research are generally consistent (Elliot, 1997; Elliot & Church, 1997; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996), the results concerning students' performance-approach goals are quite inconsistent. A performance-approach goal has been found to be a positive predictor of positive emotionality, extraversion, and a behavioural activation system, which is posited to facilitate behaviour and produce positive affect (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). On the other hand, there has been some research that demonstrates adaptive outcomes of performance-approach goals in the educational psychology literature (Elliot, Shell, Henry, & Maier, 2005; Harackiewicz, Barron, Pintrich, Elliot, & Thrash, 2002; Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001).

Study results indicating primarily more maladaptive outcomes of performance-avoidance goals are more consistent. Such goals have been found to be a positive predictor of negative emotionality, neuroticism, and a behavioural inhibition system, which is posited to inhibit behaviours and produce a negative affect (Elliot & Thrash, 2002), related to low intrinsic motivation (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996), less interest, lower performance, and undermined performance regardless of the contingency condition (Elliot et al., 2005; Elliot, 1997; Elliot & Church, 1997; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996).

Harackiewicz et al. (2002) discussed the reasons for the inconsistency of literature on performance-approach goals compared to that on mastery and performance-avoidance goals. The authors argued that performance-approach goals are conceptualised and operationalised in very different ways by different researchers, whereas mastery goals are conceptualised and operationalised more uniformly. Another reason for the differential consistency is that performance-approach goal regulation can represent a motivational hybrid in that performance-approach goals may be undergirded by approach and avoidance motivational concerns.

Goals are often situation-specific and have often been conceptualised and examined within particular domains. The domain that has received the most attention from researchers is the achievement domain, in which investigators focus on different variants of competence-relevant aims for behaviour (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). One of the most important and dominant settings in which achievement is salient is the PE setting. PE seeks to enhance students' comfort and perceived competence with and appreciation of moving—overall and in all its varied manifestations (Duda & Ntoumanis, 2003). In PE lessons, the conceptualisation of achievement goals as situation-specific perceptions with respect to competence towards a particular action or behaviour suggests that general physical self-concept will serve as a distal influence on such goals (Hagger, Hein, & Chatzisarantis, 2011). As well as physical self-concept, which can be defined as a person's global view of one's physical self (Hagger et al., 2011), related to achievement goals, achievement goals are also linked with many sports-related constructs, such as physical activity participation (Hagger, Ashford, & Stambulova, 1998), perceived competence (Sonstroem, Speliotis, & Fava, 1992), and social physique anxiety (Hagger et al., 2011; Hagger & Stevenson, 2010; Kowalski, Crocker, & Kowalski, 2001).

1.2. Social physique anxiety

Social physique anxiety is a feeling that people experience in response to others' evaluations of their physique (SPA; Hart, Leary, & Rejeski, 1989). SPA is based on theories of self-presentation and impression management. People have perceptions about their physique, but some people are worried about how others perceive their appearance. Because individuals are motivated to make a positive impression on others (Schlenker & Leary, 1982), they may become frustrated when they are unsuccessful in making a favourable impression (Lantz, Hardy, & Ainsworth, 1997). In addition, given the emphasis placed on