

Effects of regular physical activity on physical and mental health in high school students

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Abstract

Aim of this study: Physical Education lectures in high schools aim to develop the students' physical, intellectual, emotional, and social potentials in order to bring up healthier, happier, and more successful people integrating to the society. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of regular physical activity on physical and mental health in male and female high school students. Material and Method: Data were collected from 1350 participants including 725 males and 625 females at the age range of 14-19 years living in Çukurova district of Adana city attending the high school were chosen randomly. The means values for females were 15.82 ± 1.08 years for age, 163.73 ± 5.77 cm for body height, 56.01 ± 9.12 kg for body weight and 20.92 ± 3.17 for BMI, respectively. Same values for males were 15.94 ± 1.14 years for age, 175.12 ± 7.20 cm for body height, 66.80 ± 13.82 kg for body height and 21.69 ± 3.77 for BMI, respectively. After collecting socio-demographic data, short form-12 (SF- 12) short health scale were used for physical and mental health scores. Turkish version of Physical Activity Stages of Change Questionnaire (PASCQ) was used for data collection activity level in male and females high school students. In this study, participants were divided into five categories as stages of exercise behavior change including a pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance stages. After performing normality tests, Kruskal Wallis tests were used for comparisons among groups. The origin of differences was determined by Mann Whitney U tests. Findings: Results of this study showed that the percentages of physical activity level were 41,6 % for males and 27,72% for females. There were significant differences in the mean values of age, body height, physical and mental health scores depending on physical activity level in male students. In other side, the physical characteristics of female students were not significantly differentiated depending on physical activity level. Physical activity stages of behavior change were significantly correlated with age ($r = -.167$, $p < .01$), body height ($r = .123$, $p < .01$), physical health ($r = .159$, $p < .01$) and mental health ($r = .191$, $p < .01$) scores in males. These significant correlations with physical activity level were observed in body height ($r = .107$, $p < .01$), physical health ($r = .102$, $p < .05$) and mental health ($r = .087$, $p < .05$) scores in female students. In conclusion: Lower participation rates in physical activity should be increased by promotion for enhancing physical and mental health scores. The students should be informed about the benefits of exercise, then acquire movement skills and maintain their behavior in a sustainable framework. Key words: Physical activity, physical and mental health, students.

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