

# School Belonging and Happiness Level of Students from Sport Faculty

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to determine the school belonging and happiness levels of students from sports faculty according to the department, gender, and grade levels and to find the correlation between happiness and school belonging. Participants consisted of 285 students, 174 males, and 111 females, voluntarily from the teaching, coaching, and sports management departments of the faculty of sports. Data were collected using the Psychological Sense of Membership Scale (PSMS) to determine the school belonging, and the Oxford Happiness Scale (OHS) to measure happiness. The results of the analysis show no significant difference between male and female students in terms of their school belonging and happiness. However, a significant difference was found in the happiness and school belonging levels of students from different departments. In addition, the students of the sports management department have the highest sense of happiness and school belonging compared to the others.

**Keywords:** Happiness, School Belonging, Sense of Rejection, Sports Faculty Students.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

According to Osterman (2000), sense of belonging refers to “a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together”. A sense of belonging is a basic human need and is critical for maintaining motivation and succeeding in institutions such as schools (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Going to college requires young people to face transitions, including changes in their lifestyles, academic circles, and friendship networks, while also adapting to greater independence and responsibility in their personal and academic lives. While many view this transition as exciting with some anxiety in their lives, others experience emotional dissonance and depression. (Pittman & Richmond, 2007).

School belonging is positively associated with educational motivation (Tion *et al.*, 2021), classroom participation (O’Neel, 2021), school attendance (Yüksel, 2020), and academic performance (Pittman & Richard, 2007; Sanchez *et al.*, 2005). It is positively associated with self-esteem, happiness, positive relationship with teachers and friends. Students who feel a sense of belonging to the school show more interest in the lesson and get higher grades. Despite these benefits, some students find it difficult to feel a sense of school belonging. Now, the question is: what is school belonging? Godenow and Graddy (1993), states it as the degree to which “students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment”.

Students' academic and social participation affects their sense of belonging to the campus (Strayhorn, 2008). By

interacting frequently and positively with others on campus, form meaningful relationships with peers and personally, affirming that they are seen, cared for, and needed by others. In the absence of a sense of belonging, they have difficulty maintaining academic engagement and commitment in an environment where they do not feel personally valued and welcomed. (Godenow, 1993).

Although most of the studies on school belonging have been done for younger ages, few studies have been found at the university level. Among college students, a sense of belonging was associated with their major or academic self-efficacy. Also, a sense of belonging to colleges has been found to mediate the relationship between family income and academic background, with such low-income families predicting lower levels of school belonging (Ostroven & Long, 2007).

The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between happiness and school belonging and to find answers to various questions about school belonging and happiness, such as:

1. What is the school belonging level of the students of the Faculty of Sports Sciences?
2. What is the happiness level of the students of the Faculty of Sports Sciences?
3. Is there a difference in the level of school belonging according to the gender, department, academic achievement, family income, and parent education level of the students?
4. Is there a difference between students' happiness levels according to gender, department, academic achievement, family income, and parent education level?

## II. INSTRUMENTS

In this study, the Psychological Sense of Membership Scale (PSMS) and Oxford Happiness Scale (OHS) were used. PSMS was developed by Godenow (1993) and translated into Turkish by Sarı (2011). It is a self-report scale and has 18 items with two factors. The first factor is the “sense of school belonging (SSB)” which has 13 positive items and, the second factor is the “sense of rejection (SR)” which has 5 negative items. Scores from the scale can be calculated separately as sub-factors or as a total score. The scale has a 5-point Likert scale, which ranges from “not true at all” to, “completely true”. For the scale, the highest score is 90, and the lowest score is 18. High scores indicate a strong sense of school belonging.

OHS was developed by Hills and Argyle and translated into Turkish by Doğan and Sapmaz (2012) which was used here to measure happiness. This scale has 29 questions with a 6-point Likert type. 1 means “never agree” while 6 means “absolutely agree”. High scores indicate a high level of happiness.

In addition to these scales, students' gender, department, academic achievement, educational status of their parents, and family income were examined.

## III. PARTICIPANTS

Participants consisted of 285 students (174 males and 111 females) voluntarily from the teaching, coaching, and sports management departments of the faculty of sports.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS

For analysis of the study, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to determine whether the students' happiness and school belonging levels were normally distributed. It has been determined that the students' levels of school belonging and happiness are normally distributed both in the total score of the scale and in the factors. Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, and ANOVA were used to analyze scores. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Test (PPMCCT) was also utilized to determine the relationship between school belonging and happiness levels.

## V. RESULTS

The findings regarding the students' level of school belonging and happiness according to gender, department, family income, parental education level, and academic achievement are given in the tables below.

Table I presents happiness, total sense of school belonging, sense of school belonging, and sense of rejection mean of all students.

Table II shows the independent samples t-test results, where the happiness scores of the students do not differ according to gender ( $t_{285}(\text{Happiness}) = 0.119$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The happiness mean value for female students is  $\bar{X}_F = 3.98$ , while for male students is  $\bar{X}_M = 3.85$ .

Table III shows us that the scores of total school belonging and sub-dimensions did not differ according to the gender as well ( $t_{285}(\text{total-SSB}) = 0.859$ ,  $t_{285}(\text{SSB}) = 0.050$  and  $t_{285}(\text{SR}) = 0.150$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

TABLE I: THE ARITHMETIC MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION DISTRIBUTIONS OF SCHOOL BELONGING AND HAPPINESS LEVELS

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD
Happiness	285	3.90	0.705
Total SSB	285	3.25	0.520
SSB	285	3.18	0.350
SR	285	2.60	0.130

TABLE II: INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST RESULTS OF STUDENTS' HAPPINESS LEVELS ACCORDING TO GENDER

	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	p
Happiness	Female	111	3.98	0.705	0.119	0.828
	Male	174	3.85	0.701		

\* $p < 0.05$

TABLE III: INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST RESULTS OF STUDENTS' SCHOOL BELONGING LEVELS ACCORDING TO GENDER

	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	p
Total-SSB	Female	111	3.58	0.627	0.859	0.423
	Male	174	3.56	0.551		
SSB	Female	111	3.56	0.642	0.050	0.861
	Male	174	2.31	0.607		
SR	Female	111	2.38	0.784	0.150	0.951
	Male	174	2.53	0.756		

\* $p < 0.05$

TABLE IV: ANOVA RESULTS OF STUDENTS' HAPPINESS AND SCHOOL BELONGING LEVELS ACCORDING TO DEPARTMENT

	Departments	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	p
Happiness	Teaching	94	3.70	0.705	11.699	0.000*
	Coaching	90	3.82	0.679		
	Sport Management	101	4.15	0.655		
	Total	285				
Total-SSB	Teaching	94	3.49	0.551	5.386	0.005*
	Coaching	90	3.48	0.580		
	Sport Management	101	3.72	0.582		
	Total	285				
SSB	Teaching	94	3.51	0.584	5.475	0.005*
	Coaching	90	3.50	0.641		
	Sport Management	101	3.76	0.607		
	Total	285				
SR	Teaching	94	2.55	0.734	0.207	0.128
	Coaching	90	2.54	0.772		
	Sport Management	101	2.35	0.790		
	Total	285				

\*p &lt; 0.05

TABLE V: ANOVA RESULTS OF STUDENTS' HAPPINESS LEVELS ACCORDING TO THEIR PARENTS' EDUCATION LEVELS

Happiness	Education Level	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	p
Mother	RW	20	3.58	0.917	1.153	0.332
	PS	130	3.91	0.672		
	MS	56	3.93	0.734		
	HS	69	3.92	0.690		
	U+	10	4.00	0.519		
	Total	285				
Father	RW	10	3.21	0.810	2.808	0.020*
	PS	85	3.87	0.734		
	MS	67	3.96	0.641		
	HS	95	3.93	0.715		
	U+	28	3.98	0.586		
	Total	285				

\*p &lt; 0.05, RW: Reading-writing, PS: Primary school, MS: Middle school, HS: High school, U+: University or above.

TABLE VI: ANOVA RESULTS OF STUDENTS' SCHOOL BELONGING LEVELS ACCORDING TO THEIR PARENTS' EDUCATION LEVELS

		Education Level	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	p
Mother	Total SSB	RW	20	3.46	0.738	0.631	0.641
		PS	130	3.61	0.532		
		MS	56	3.49	0.637		
		HS	69	3.59	0.584		
		U+	10	3.58	0.524		
	SSB	RW	20	3.49	0.795	0.464	0.762
		PS	130	3.62	0.567		
		MS	56	3.53	0.671		
		HS	69	3.60	0.634		
		U+	10	3.73	0.564		
	SR	RW	20	2.61	0.814	1.117	0.349
		PS	130	2.42	0.715		
		MS	56	2.60	0.846		
		HS	69	2.42	0.750		
		U+	10	2.74	0.102		
Father	Total SSB	RW	10	3.38	0.708	0.623	0.647
		PS	85	3.59	0.558		
		MS	67	3.60	0.565		
		HS	95	3.52	0.625		
		U+	28	3.63	0.481		
	SSB	RW	10	3.39	0.796	0.975	0.422
		PS	85	3.62	0.574		
		MS	67	3.60	0.591		
		HS	95	3.54	0.692		
		U+	28	3.74	0.483		
	SR	RW	10	2.62	0.720	1.988	0.090
		PS	85	2.47	0.797		
		MS	67	2.29	0.705		
		HS	95	2.51	0.761		
		U+	28	2.75	0.822		

\*p &lt; 0.05

TABLE VII: ANOVA RESULTS OF STUDENTS' HAPPINESS LEVELS  
ACCORDING TO FAMILY INCOME

Happiness	Income (TL)	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	p
Total Income	Min. wage	60	3.86	0.79	0.64	0.59
	Min. wage-3500	71	3.86	0.69		
	3501-5000	92	3.88	0.63		
	5001 and above	62	4.01	0.74		
	Total	285				

\*p &lt; 0.05

TABLE VIII: ANOVA RESULTS OF STUDENTS' SCHOOL BELONGING  
LEVELS ACCORDING TO FAMILY INCOME

	Income (TL)	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	p
Total SSB	Min. wage	60	3.55	0.66	1.93	0.13
	Min. wage-3500	71	3.53	0.58		
	3501-5000	92	3.51	0.65		
	5001 and above	62	3.72	0.56		
	Total	285	—	—		
SSB	Min. wage	60	3.58	0.64	0.29	0.03
	Min. wage-3500	71	3.54	0.56		
	3501-5000	92	3.51	0.58		
	5001 and above	62	3.79	0.52		
	Total	285	—	—		
SR	Min. wage	60	2.53	0.80	0.22	0.88
	Min. wage-3500	71	2.49	0.80		
	3501-5000	92	2.47	0.75		
	5001 and above	62	2.41	0.76		
	Total	285	—	—		

\*p &lt; 0.05

TABLE IX: ANOVA RESULTS OF STUDENTS' HAPPINESS AND SCHOOL  
BELONGING LEVELS ACCORDING TO THEIR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

	GPA	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	p
Happiness	0-2.00	111	3.83	0.70	0.83	0.48
	2.01-2.50	97	3.92	0.66		
	2.51-3.00	54	4.01	0.80		
	3.01-4.00	23	3.89	0.66		
	Total	285	3.53	0.55		
Total SSB	0-2.00	111	3.55	0.59	0.71	0.55
	2.01-2.50	97	3.66	0.57		
	2.51-3.00	54	3.62	0.68		
	3.01-4.00	23	3.62	0.68		
	Total	285	3.52	0.59		
SSB	0-2.00	111	3.61	0.64	0.92	0.43
	2.01-2.50	97	3.68	0.59		
	2.51-3.00	54	3.67	0.74		
	3.01-4.00	23	3.67	0.74		
	Total	285	3.61	0.64		
SR	0-2.00	111	2.45	0.75	0.84	0.47
	2.01-2.50	97	2.56	0.79		
	2.51-3.00	54	2.37	0.79		
	3.01-4.00	23	2.47	0.75		
	Total	285	2.45	0.75		

\*p &lt; 0.05

One-way ANOVA was conducted for three different; Teaching, Coaching, and Sport Management departments' students in order to determine their happiness and school belonging levels (See Table IV). A significant difference was found in happiness ( $p(\text{Happiness}) = 0.000$ ), Total-SSB ( $p(\text{Total-SSB}) = 0.005$ ) and SSB scores ( $p(\text{SSB}) = 0.005$ ). Then, the Tukey test was conducted to find out where the difference comes from. It has been determined that the students of the Sports Management department differ significantly from the students of the teaching and coaching department in their happiness levels ( $F_{285} = 11.699$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Considering the level of belonging to the school according to the departments of the students, it is seen that the students of the Sports Management department get significantly different scores from the students of both the Teaching and Coaching departments in terms of their Total-SSB ( $F_{285} = 5.386$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ) and SSB levels ( $F_{285} = 5.475$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ).

When Table V is examined, students' happiness levels increase according to the education level of both their parents. However, this increase differs significantly only according to

the education level of the father. The happiness levels of students whose fathers can only read and write differ significantly from those whose fathers have primary, secondary, high school and university education or higher ( $F_{285} = 2.808$ ,  $p = 0.020$ ).

According to findings in Table VI, the school belonging level of students did not display a significant difference according to their parents' education level.

The statistical analysis of Table VII shows that there is no significant difference between the happiness levels of the students according to the total income of their parents. However, the happiness level of students with the highest income was found to be relatively higher than the others.

The findings in Table VIII show that sense of school belonging levels of students differ significantly according to parents' income ( $F_{285} = 0.289$ ,  $p = 0.036$ ). This difference is between students whose income is 5001 TL and above, and those whose income is up to 5000 TL.

The results of Table IX show that neither the level of happiness nor the level of school belonging differ according to the academic achievement of the students.

Finally, the Pearson Correlation analysis was performed to find the correlation between school belonging and happiness. It has shown a positively significant correlation ( $r = 0.482$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to determine the happiness and school belonging levels of students from sports faculty according to their gender, department, family income, parents' education, and academic achievement. When we look at the mean of students' school belonging and happiness, it can be seen that the values obtained here are similar to those studies conducted by Sarı and Özgök (2016), Atabey (2020), and Yüksel (2020).

The results of this study show that the gender of the students is not related to school belonging. Our results are consistent with Sanches *et al.* (2004), Bursalı, (2020), Osterman (2000), and Godenow (1993). However, there are a few studies found that students' school belonging varies significantly according to their gender. Female students have higher school belonging levels than male students according to Sarı (2014), Sarı and Özgök (2016), Ergün *et al.* (2018). In some researches, the differences in school belonging are mostly reached with middle school and high school students. However, the school belonging may differ in gender at college level students.

We also looked at the happiness results which seen that gender has not made a significant difference on happiness. Those findings are consistent with the findings of Çankaya and Meydan (2018), Doğan and Aydın (2020), Yeter (2019), and Demir and Duman (2019).

When students' school belonging and happiness levels were examined according to their departments, we realized that students from the sport management department have the highest sense of school belonging and the lowest sense of rejection compared to the students from the teaching and coaching departments. Also, they are the happiest students at the faculty. Although no study in this area has been reached so far, the positive expectations of the students of the



management department about their business fields or school may have caused this result.

Moreover, the results from happiness and school belonging levels according to parents' education have revealed that the happiness level of students did not change according to mothers' education but it showed significant difference according to fathers' education. Contrary to our findings Çankaya and Meydan (2018) found no difference according to parents' education levels. According to our findings, as the education level of the parents' increases, the level of belonging of the students to the school increases relatively without a significant figure. However, Pittman and Richmond (2007) found in their study that students whose parents had higher education levels had higher levels of school belonging. In our study on these issues, we investigated the education level of the participants rather than the education level of the families.

The study examined whether there was a difference according to family income and students' total sense of school belonging and sense of rejection level. It was observed that there was a difference according to the sub-dimension of sense of school belonging. As the family income increases, the level of belonging to the school also increases, but this increase is not significant. According to Godenow (1993) school's socio-economic situation is one of the vital factors that influence specifically a sense of school belonging level. Sarı and Özgök (2014) study showed that students with higher income families have higher school belonging levels than students from middle and low socio-economic families.

Similar results emerge when we look at the differences in happiness and income. Students' happiness level increases as their income increases, but this increase is not significant.

A sense of belonging and happiness played a positive effect on students' academic achievement but not an insignificant level. Especially, a greater sense of belonging and happiness was determined with higher grades; students with higher grades felt happier and belong to university when compared with students with lower grades. According to Lam *et al.* (2015) students with a greater sense of school belonging experience positive emotions and had higher academic success. Bursalı (2020) and Sarı (2013) found that students with high academic success also had high levels of school belonging.

In conclusion, with this study, we examined the relationship between school belonging and happiness in sports faculty students of three different departments and determined that there was a positive relationship between them. Although there are not many studies on this subject, Veysel and Altınok (2021) found that there is a positive relationship between school engagement and happiness, and Kozan *et al.* (2019) found in their studies that when the need for belonging is met, the level of happiness increases as the general belongingness increases.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest.

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