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The value levels of high school students regarding physical education and sports activities

Los niveles de valor de los estudiantes de secundaria en relación con la educación física y las actividades deportivas

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to comprehend the value level of high school students regarding PE and sports lesson activities, and to understand if that value significantly differs according to sex, participation in school sports, participation in sports clubs, and grade. In a combined analysis, students demonstrated an appreciation for the five items focused on in the questionnaire (success, respect, national culture and unity, sportsmanship and sports culture), indicating values around 4 out of 5. In the sex analysis, only the intensity differed, with the order of valorization remaining the same, with respect being the highest, followed closely by success, and sportsmanship coming last. Those actively involved in sports tended to place a higher value on success, while individuals who did not participate valued respect more. Success was only prioritized over respect at the age of 11. The positions from third to fifth place in terms of appreciation consistently remained in the order: national culture and unity, sports culture, and sportsmanship. The PE class can be very enriching in developing values in students by promoting problem-solving situations to stimulate reflection. Therefore, merely participating in the class is not enough; the teacher must actively create these situations and encourage dialogue.

Keywords: values education, physical education, sports, high school students

Resumen

El objetivo del presente estudio fue comprender el nivel de valor de los estudiantes de secundaria respecto de la educación física y las actividades lectivas deportivas, y comprender si ese valor difiere significativamente según el sexo, la participación en deportes escolares, la participación en clubes deportivos y el grado. En un análisis combinado, los estudiantes demostraron aprecio por los cinco ítems centrados en el cuestionario (éxito, respeto, cultura y unidad nacional, espíritu deportivo y cultura deportiva), indicando valores alrededor de 4 sobre 5. En el análisis de sexo, solo la intensidad diferían, siendo el orden de valoración el mismo, siendo el respeto el más alto, seguido de cerca por el éxito y el espíritu deportivo en último lugar. Aquellos que participaban activamente en deportes tendían a valorar más el éxito, mientras que los que no participaban valoraban más el respeto. Sólo a los 11 años se priorizó el éxito sobre el respeto. Las posiciones del tercer al quinto lugar en términos de valoración se mantuvieron constantemente en el orden: cultura y unidad nacional, cultura deportiva y espíritu deportivo. La clase de Educación Física puede resultar muy enriquecedora a la hora de desarrollar valores en los estudiantes fomentando situaciones de resolución de problemas que estimulen la reflexión. Por lo tanto, no basta con participar en la clase; el profesor debe crear activamente estas situaciones y fomentar el diálogo.

Palabras clave: educación en valores, educación física, deportes, estudiantes de secundaria.

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Introduction

It is a fact that students spend most of their daily time in a school, intending to improve their cognitive, social, cultural, emotional, and motor development (Nascimento et al., 2021). School allows physical exercise through physical education (PE) and school sports activities that have a positive impact on students (Van Boekel et al., 2016). Through these practices, students also acquire a set of skills that are transversal to other contexts, such as discipline, organization, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, leadership, cooperation, communication, and emotional control, that is, values applied in everyday life (Halstead & Taylor, 2000; Opstoel et al., 2020).

As the school assumes the role of providing such activities, the PE plan, although structured externally to schools and designed to meet certain objectives, must also be organized in a way that meets the student's objectives and what they value, making the offer differentiated (Januário et al., 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to understand what students value in these activities, creating a balance between all those involved in this process, school, teachers, and students. In the study developed by Mantovani et al. (2021), improving health is valued by students when practicing PE and sports activities (Mantovani et al., 2021). Conversely, social factors emerge as a form of esteem derived from interacting with peers during sporting activities (Van Boekel et al., 2016). Still regarding social factors, the same author suggests that through sports practice, students externalize some maladjusted behaviors, reducing stress levels (Van Boekel et al., 2016). The search for fun, challenges, and competition also appears as valued factors for practicing sports (Beni et al., 2017). Likewise, the improvement or maintenance of physical abilities and performance is valued by students who practice frequent sports, inside or outside the school context (Carvalho et al., 2021).

Although difficult to understand and explain, the student's connection with PE and sport seems to be influenced by the teacher and his conduct among many factors, as he/she is considered the model and example in a practical context for his/her students (Halstead & Taylor, 2000a). On the other hand, it may also be influenced by other factors such as the student's sex, school year, and participation in sports (school or clubs). The study by Eime et al. (2015), highlights that for females, support from

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teachers, coaches, and the community in which they are inserted is preponderant in remaining connected to sport (Eime et al., 2015). Compared to females, Cid's (2002) study found that males prioritize the preservation of physical capabilities, enjoyment, and recreation (Cid, 2002). Regarding the school years, the evidence reveals that there is a tendency to dropout sports throughout the school years (mainly in high school), a fact that seems related to the pressure on maintaining grades in relation to the student's academic career (Eime et al., 2015; Wagnsson & Patriksson, 2013). The literature seems to be consensual about the appreciation that students have for PE and school sports activities and what these entail for practice outside the school context (clubs), for example in the acquisition of more positive attitudes that have a greater impact on specialization of students in their practices (Fairclough & Stratton, 2005; Lima et al., 2018). Understanding these issues related to PE and school sports activities and how students are valued is indeed complex. To the best of our knowledge, existing evidence on these topics is limited and triggered the objectives of this study: a) analyze the level of appreciation of high school students towards PE and sports activities; b) compare the level of appreciation of high school students towards PE and sports activities with sociodemographic variables.

Material and Methods

Study design:

In the present study, an observational and descriptive study was applied.

Participants:

A total of 669 students, 321 girls (48.0%) and 348 boys (52.7%), participated in this study. The inclusion criteria encompassed: i) boys and girls in the public schools from 9th to 12th grades; adolescents with the informed consent from the students' parents or legal teachers signed. The exclusion criterion was: i) boys and girls in the public schools but below 9th grade; ii) adolescents without the informed consent signed; iii) students with special needs. The data collection took place in Istanbul during the year of 2023.

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Procedures:

An alliance was established between the researcher and the district's education department to ensure a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Ethical approval from the relevant ethics committee was obtained. Study design and variable selection were conducted in collaboration with the school board. Then, the teachers participating in the study were given training to minimize inter-rater bias during the application of the evaluation tool. The data collection process was synchronized on the same day and during the same period. The assessment tool was administered under the supervision of the relevant schoolteachers and a researcher from the research team.

Parents, principals, and teachers were informed about the nature and purpose of the study through a document read and signed by all of them to collaborate on the project. The study protocol was approved by the Social and Humanities Research Ethics Committee of the Haliç University (27.10.2023/07). All procedures adhered to the Declaration of Helsinki for research involving human subjects.

Data collection tool:

The first part of the data collection tool included a demographic information form (sex, grade, participation in school sports, participation in sports club) to determine the general characteristics of high school students. The second part of the data collection tool included the “*Physical Education and Sports Lesson High School Value Scale*”. The scale was developed by Yücekaya et al. (2022) and was designed as 28 items with a 5-point Likert type (χ^2/sd [2.57], GFI [0.93], CFI [0.92], AGFI [0.92], NFI [0.89], IFI [0.91], RMSEA [.044]). There are five sub-dimensions in the scale (Success: 1-7th items, Respect: 8-12 items, National culture, and unity: 13-16 items, Sportsmanship: 17-21 items, Sports culture: 22-28 items). There are no negative items in the scale. The scale is scored as 5- Always, 4- Often, 3- Sometimes, 2- Rarely, 1- Never. The increase in the scores subjects receive from the scale means that their value levels regarding PE and sports class activities also increase (Yucekaya et al., 2022). Regarding the reliability of the PE and sports lesson high school value scale, the internal consistency coefficient scores are for the success sub-dimension .80, for the sports culture .74, for the national culture and unity sub-dimensions .74, for the respect sub-

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dimension .75, for the sportsmanship sub-dimension .73 and it was concluded that the total reliability coefficient was .87 (Yucekaya et al., 2022). Within the scope of this research, the total reliability coefficient was found to be .90.

Statistical analysis:

The descriptive statistics are presented in the form of mean and standard deviation. The Kolmogorov-Test showed the data do not present normal distribution ($p = .00$), thus the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare sex, participating in school sports, and participating in sports clubs. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to compare grades, with the Post-hoc Dunn's test. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, v. 29.0) software was used, with an alpha significance level of 0.05.

Results

Table 1 shows the sample general description. Data were split between sex, participation in school sports, participation in sports clubs, and grade.

Table 1. Sample characterization

		Success	Respect	National Culture and Unity	Sportsmanship	Sports Culture	
All participants	N	669	669	669	669	669	
	Mean	4.24	4.27	4.11	3.88	4.17	
	SD	0.57	0.74	0.72	0.72	0.63	
Sex	N	348	348	348	348	348	
	Boys	Mean	4.13	4.16	3.96	3.80	4.07
		SD	0.60	0.79	0.77	0.77	0.70
	Girls	N	321	321	321	321	321
		Mean	4.36	4.39	4.26	3.96	4.28
	SD	0.50	0.66	0.63	0.65	0.53	
Participation in school sports	N	122	122	122	122	122	
	Yes	Mean	4.46	4.44	4.34	4.15	4.37
		SD	0.42	0.63	0.64	0.60	0.58
	No	N	547	547	547	547	547
		Mean	4.19	4.24	4.05	3.82	4.12
	SD	0.58	0.76	0.73	0.73	0.63	
Participation in sports clubs	Yes	N	156	156	156	156	
		Mean	4.49	4.46	4.35	4.19	4.38

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		SD	0.48	0.68	0.65	0.64	0.60
Grade	N	513	513	513	513	513	513
	No	Mean	4.17	4.22	4.03	3.78	4.10
		SD	0.57	0.75	0.72	0.71	0.62
	9	N	166	166	166	166	166
		Mean	4.35	4.42	4.27	4.12	4.28
		SD	0.48	0.66	0.65	0.68	0.60
	10	N	161	161	161	161	161
		Mean	4.37	4.40	4.32	4.04	4.33
		SD	0.51	0.64	0.65	0.67	0.59
	11	N	173	173	173	173	173
		Mean	4.29	4.26	4.15	3.85	4.18
		SD	0.54	0.73	0.61	0.64	0.54
	12	N	169	169	169	169	169
		Mean	3.96	4.02	3.70	3.53	3.90
		SD	0.63	0.84	0.78	0.73	0.69

General results showed that there was a significant difference in all sub-dimensions, as indicated by a Mann-Whitney U test (Table 2).

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U test results

	Success	Respect	National Culture and Unity	Sportsmanship	Sports Culture
Sex	42790,50	46016,00	42848,50	49056,00	46334,50
	-5,25	-3,98	-5,25	-2,73	-3,82
	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00
Participatin in school sports	23889,50	27930,50	25265,50	24105,50	24827,50
	-4,93	-2,84	-4,23	-4,82	-4,44
	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Participation in sports clubs	24907,50	31664,50	29007,50	25443,00	27767,50
	-7,18	-3,99	-5,24	-6,92	-5,81
	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00

Comparing grades, results showed that there was a significant difference in all sub-dimensions, as indicated by a Kruskal-Wallis H test (Table 3).

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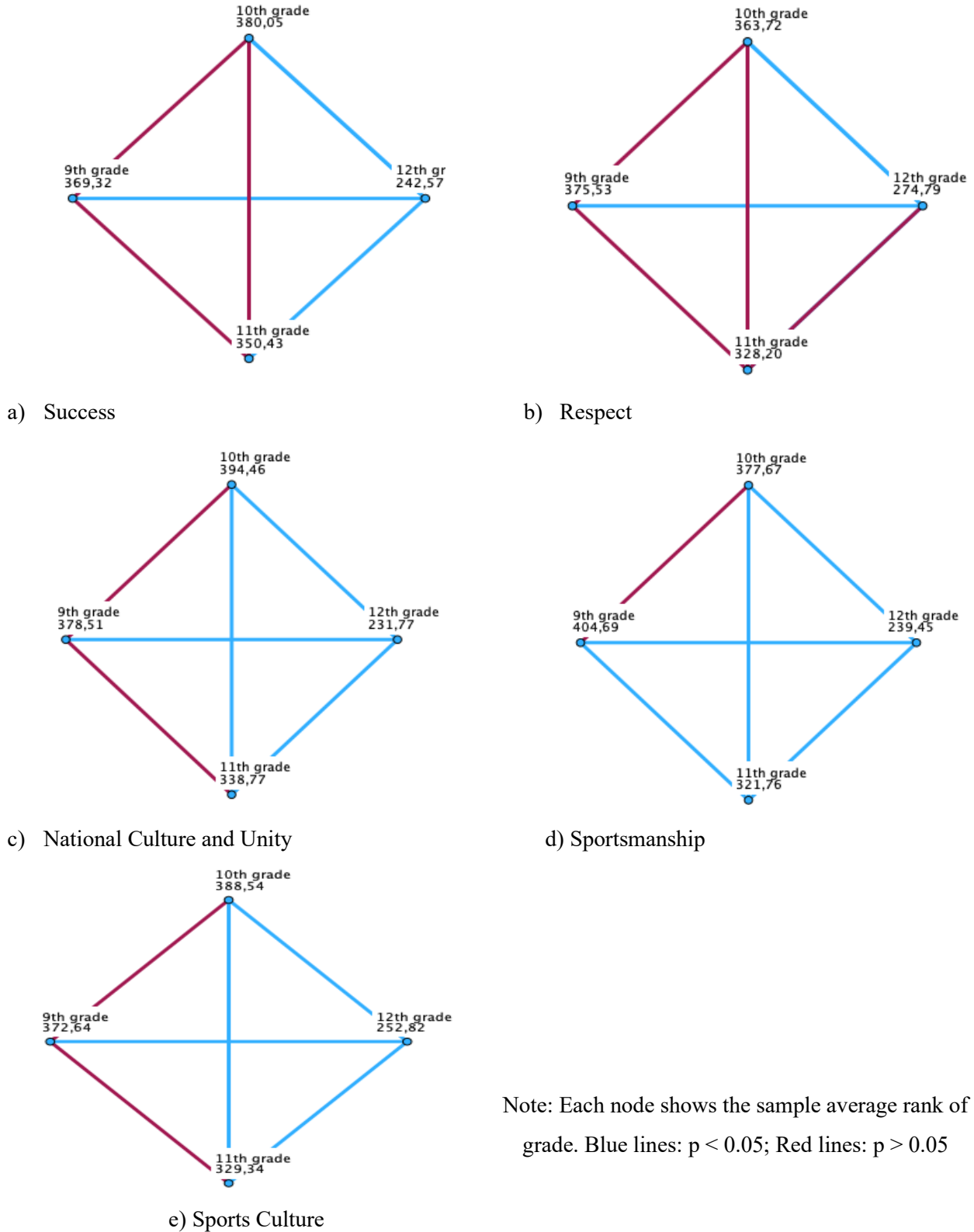
Table 3. Kruskal-Wallis H test results

	Success	Respect	National Culture and Unity	Sportsmanship	Sports Culture
Kruskal-Wallis H	54.18	28.01	7.96	72.16	49.68
df	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00

Data also showed (Figure 1) that there were significant differences according to subdimensions and grades. Furthermore, the Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed some differences during pairwise comparisons to Success (12th – 9th grade: $H(3) = 126.76$; $p = 00$; 12th – 10th grade: $H(3) = 137.48$; $p = 00$; 12th – 11th grade: $H(3) = 107.86$; $p = .00$), Respect (12th – 9th grade: $H(3) = 100.75$; $p = 00$; 12th – 10th grade: $H(3) = 88.93$; $p = 00$; 12th – 11th grade: $H(3) = 53.41$; $p = .01$; 11th – 9th grade: $H(3) = 47.33$; $p = .02$), National Culture and Unity (12th – 9th grade: $H(3) = 146.74$; $p = 00$; 12th – 10th grade: $H(3) = 162.69$; $p = 00$; 12th – 11th grade: $H(3) = 107.00$; $p = .00$; 11th – 10th grade: $H(3) = 55.69$; $p = .00$), Sportsmanship (12th – 9th grade: $H(3) = 165.24$; $p = 00$; 12th – 10th grade: $H(3) = 138.22$; $p = 00$; 12th – 11th grade: $H(3) = 82.37$; $p = .00$; 11th – 9th grade: $H(3) = 82.93$; $p = .00$; 11th – 10th grade: $H(3) = 55.91$; $p = .01$), and Sports Culture (12th – 9th grade: $H(3) = 135.72$; $p = 00$; 12th – 10th grade: $H(3) = 119.82$; $p = 00$; 12th – 11th grade: $H(3) = 76.52$; $p = .00$; 11th – 9th grade: $H(3) = 59.20$; $p = .01$; 11th – 10th grade: $H(3) = 43.30$; $p = .04$). Despite that, the other pairwise comparisons among the different subdimensions do not present any statistical differences.

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Figure 1. Kruskal-Wallis pairwise comparisons regarding grades



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Discussion

The aim of the present study was twofold: i) to comprehend the value level of high school students regarding PE and sports lesson activities; and ii) to understand if that value significantly differs according to sex, participation in school sports, participation in sports clubs, and grade. Regarding the first aim, results showed that, when analyzing the entire sample, the five evaluated values showed similar importance, hovering around 4 points out of 5. The highest value was assigned to respect (4.27), while the lowest was attributed to sportsmanship (3.88), as indicated in Table 1. However, this appreciation was not equal for each subgroup, where differences were found in all of them. For instance, both girls and boys valued in the same order, but with greater magnitudes in girls in all components. Participation in school or club sports did not impact the order of appreciation for both groups. Those actively involved in sports tended to place a higher value on success, while individuals who did not participate valued respect more. Interestingly, sportsmanship was consistently ranked as the least valued aspect among both groups. Finally, only at the age of 11 was success valued more than respect, where, once again, sportsmanship was the least appreciated. In summary, it can be stated that success and respect are the most valued items in the various subgroups, with varying degrees of emphasis. The positions from third to fifth place in terms of appreciation consistently remained in the order: national culture and unity, sports culture, and sportsmanship.

The school plays a dual role in character development. Firstly, it builds upon and supplements the values children are already developing by exposing them to a range of societal values, such as equal opportunities and respect for diversity. Secondly, it assists children in reflecting on, understanding, and applying their own evolving values (Halstead & Taylor, 2000b). This process is significantly influenced by the behavior of teachers (Hansen, 1992; Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011), who possess the power to impact students. Even if teachers don't explicitly aim to set a moral example, their values are inherent in teaching, making it unlikely for students to avoid their influence entirely. Research suggests that children are most influenced by teachers whose qualities they admire (Halstead & Taylor, 2000b). Therefore, teachers should be cognizant of their ability to shape students' character. Implementing moments of discussion, specifically

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focused on modeling, and eliciting reasoning, aids in moral development. PE is a crucial framework for producing graduates with values and competence, fostering continuous learning through participation in physical activities (Ginanjar et al., 2019; Ramadan et al., 2020). When analyzing the data from this study as a whole, it appears that the targeted teachers have made efforts to convey the idea of respect through PE classes. However, achieving success follows closely, which could be a concern. The interpretation hinges on how this emphasis is directed—whether it is towards fostering healthy competition or pursuing success at any cost.

While the overall sex gap in sports participation appears to be narrowing, there is evidence suggesting that boys and girls still tend to engage in different sporting activities (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Fasting, 2005; Pfister, 1993). More specifically, these distinctions in sports involvement stem from commonly held perceptions or stereotypes about the typical activities of boys and girls (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Gill, 2002; Klomsten et al., 2005; Pfister, 1993). However, in the present study, this difference was only observed in the intensity of the valuation and not in its order. In fact, both girls and boys prioritized respect the most, followed by success, sports culture in third place, then national culture and unity, and finally sportsmanship. Thus, the sex gap regarding participation and the sports value, appears to be fading, as suggested by the literature.

Although we did not use the same instrument (they used the Youth Sports Values Questionnaire), our data seems not to support the findings of Lee et al. study (2000), where the most important aspect for young athletes was to enjoy their sport, in contrast to the current study, which demonstrated that success is the most valued in this sub-groups. Indeed, within the realm of sports and PE research, perspectives have been divided. On one side are those who assert a clear connection between engaging in sports and the cultivation of social and moral values (Bronikowska et al., 2019; Kowalska, 2015; Özge Pekel, 2023). On the other side are those who argue that there is nothing inherently moral about sports participation (Wright, 1987), as it could equally foster assertiveness, dominance, and an unyielding desire to win at any cost. Nonetheless, there is a general consensus that the approach to sports and PE can be tailored in a manner that contributes to the moral development of children (Hansen, 1992). Regrettably, modern sports are facing a values crisis, with the allure of spectacle and

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simplicity undermining honesty and fair play. The stakes of victory now include not only glory but also significant financial gains (Bronikowska et al., 2019). Sports values should encompass not just success but also fair play, sportsmanship, friendship, and tolerance, emphasizing the quality of interactions during activities (Lee et al., 2000). For instance, research on a moral program rooted in Olympism, like the Fair Play for Kids program in Canada (Naul et al., 2017), suggests that moral development in PE classes requires specially designed teaching programs.

Individuals undergo continuous development and change throughout their lives, with adolescence being a period marked by significant transformations, both personally and socially (Özge Pekel, 2023). The sports environment plays a crucial role in the physical and interpersonal development of individuals during early adolescence, fostering positive changes in communication and the cultivation of prosocial competencies (Cronin & Allen, 2018; Graupensperger et al., 2018; Izquierdo & Anguera, 2021). Early adolescence presents a pivotal opportunity to instil attitudes toward fair play, with individuals beginning to grasp the importance of correct behavior (Özge Pekel, 2023). The present study, which includes the early adolescence period, showed that students highly value respect, however, success is immediately following, being more appreciated at the age of 11. Considering that fundamental concepts such as respect for opponents, fair play, friendship, and helpfulness are practically learned through metaphors and drawings during games in PE lessons at school (Özge Pekel, 2023), they could be more explored, especially in these ages. Nonetheless, it is emphasized that merely attending PE classes is insufficient for values acquisition, active effort is crucial for their development and acquisition.

It is thought that the following limitations should be taken into consideration when evaluating the results obtained in the research. First of all, the research was limited to high school students. However, specific information on age, sports branch and ethnicity were not obtained. Repeating the research with a larger sample group in various sports clubs, branches and ages may increase the possibility of generalizing the results to the universe. In addition, although the sample size is close to each other in terms of gender, grade, it is not equal. However, it is thought that more purposeful sampling strategies may produce more generalizable results for future research. This

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descriptive study only provides snapshot information regarding the value levels of high school students regarding PE and sports activities. In addition, it is thought that research on this subject should be increased in order to evaluate these findings in the context of the universe examined using longitudinal or experimental research methods. These parameters are an important aspect of this study for future research. Despite these limitations, it can be said that the study findings make an up-to-date and theory-based contribution to the literature on the value levels of high school students regarding PE and sports activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights that respect and success are highly valued across different subgroups, with respect receiving the highest rating overall. While there were variations in the intensity of these values, the ranking remained consistent, consistently placing sportsmanship as the least valued. Gender differences were observed, with girls consistently valuing these attributes more than boys. Participation in sports influenced value emphasis, with active participants prioritizing success and non-participants emphasizing respect. Interestingly, success was valued more than respect at age 11, yet sportsmanship continued to be the least appreciated. These findings underscore the need to tailor educational and sports programs to emphasize respect and success, addressing the lower regard for sportsmanship to foster a balanced value system among young individuals engaged in sports.

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