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# Examination of the Relationship Between Social Appearance Anxiety and Communication Skills of Faculty of Sport Sciences Students

Tuncay Öcal<sup>1</sup>, Serkan Necati Metin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Sport Sciences, Aksaray University, Aksaray, Turkey

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Sport Sciences, Bandırma Onyedü Eylül University, Bandırma/Balıkesir, Turkey

Correspondence: Tuncay Öcal, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Aksaray University, Aksaray, Turkey, E-mail: tuncayocal@aksaray.edu.tr

## Abstract

Concerns about social appearance, which are common especially among young people, and their preferences in communication based on these concerns have come to a remarkable level. From this point of view, the study aimed determined to examine the relationship between social appearance anxiety and communication skills levels on the students in the faculties of sports sciences. Following the aim, the research was performed on 220 students in total, and male and female students were selected randomly. The sample of the study, in which the relational screening model, which is one of the quantitative research methods, was used as a method. Besides, the "Social Appearance Anxiety Scale" (SAAS) and the "Communication Skills Assessment Scale (CSAS) was used, and ANOVA and t-tests were used in the statistical evaluation of the data. In the evaluation of the data, it was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the groups in the sub-dimensions of communication skills in terms of communication skills depending on gender ( $p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, it was understood that there was no statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of social appearance anxiety related to the gender variable ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Keywords:** Social Appearance Anxiety, Communication Skills, Faculty of Sport Sciences Students

## 1. Introduction

To be accepted in society, people focus on their images where they can reveal themselves. Body image has a priority in this regard. Body image does not imply a static or merely internal quality of a person. To understand body image, it is necessary to understand how these changes feel as well as the inevitable physical changes that people go through throughout their lives. At the same time, the longitudinal and simultaneous consequences of body image are important, as well as the numerous factors that contribute to body image (Markey, 2010). Body image has an important place in the formation of people's self-esteem, and it is an important component of self-esteem, which can be briefly defined as self-satisfaction. There are two-dimensional aspects of body image, these

are positive body image and negative body image. High self-esteem is associated with positive body image, while low self-esteem is associated with negative body image (Jung & Lee, 2006). Besides, positive or negative body image makes people's self-esteem an impressive factor in terms of social phobia levels, social relations, eating behaviours, sexual behaviours and emotional life (Cash & Fleming, 2002). Positive body image is mentioned when people respect their bodies and find themselves acceptable as they are. It also means being able to accept even if the person has things that he/she will be dissatisfied with (Levine & Smolak, 2016).

Negative body image, as well as positive body image, finds a place in people's lives. It is known that any person can experience body dissatisfaction at any stage of his/her life. There are factors that make some people more likely than others to develop a negative body image. These factors include age, gender, dieting, friends and family expressing body image concerns, body size, low self-esteem and/or depression, teasing and bullying, and personality traits (Griffiths et al., 2016; Becker et al., 2016; Van de Grift et al., 2016; Rodgers et al., 2021; Nichols et al., 2018). If these factors explain: Age; Body image is often formed in late childhood and adolescence, but body dissatisfaction can occur in people of all ages. Gender: Women are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction than men, but people of any gender can experience negative body image. Friends and family who express body image concerns and dieting: Role models that express body image concerns and model weight-loss behaviours can increase a person's likelihood of developing body dissatisfaction, regardless of actual body type. Body size: people with a higher weight are at an increased risk of body dissatisfaction due to society's focus on weight. Low self-esteem and/or depression; People with low self-esteem or depression have an increased risk of body dissatisfaction. Teasing and bullying; Regardless of their actual body type, people who are bullied about their appearance and/or weight have a higher risk of developing body dissatisfaction. Personality characteristics: Successful people with perfectionist tendencies, strict "black and white" thinking, internalizing beauty ideals, and frequently comparing themselves to others are at higher risk of developing body dissatisfaction (National Eating Disorders Collaboration, 2021).

The symbol of being oneself, especially in adolescence, is explained with concepts such as body image and body perception (Orsel et al., 2004). Adolescence provides a particularly striking example of the developmental importance of body image and the current importance of body image research (Markey, 2010). There are many reasons why it is important to understand adolescent body image. It is sufficient to look at a newspaper, television, magazines, and especially recently social media channels to remind us of cultural obsessions about the appearance of bodies. It is possible to find information and guidance on many other topics such as how to change the physical image, surgical operations, medicine and cosmetic products in these services. For this reason, it is understandable that today's young people are more interested in these issues compared to those in the past and have anxiety about body image (Markey & Gillen, 2011). Anxiety about body image is more common among people in industrialized countries and this can cause serious health problems such as eating disorders, depression, and obesity (Gillen & Markey, 2015).

One of the most important factors in the formation of social appearance concerns of individuals is the impression they want to leave on the people they are in contact with or want to be in contact with. In essence, there is a desire to build relationships, and all relationships are sustainable through communication. Dökmen (2004) has defined communication as "the process of producing, transferring and making sense of information." Although everyone is in constant communication in some way, they may have difficulties in establishing healthy and effective communication. As Korkut and Bugay (2014) have stated, "effective and healthy communication is possible when the communicating individuals understand each other correctly and convey this to each other, treat each other with respect, and feel understood." Since there are goals such as learning, influencing, sharing, existing, being happy and directing in the realization of communication (Bıçakçı, 1998).

Messages are very important in effective and healthy communication, and they reflect the other party in writing, verbal or body language. Written or non-verbal messages reflect as facial expression, body language, tone of voice, clothes chosen, yawning, etc. These elements are of great importance for healthy and effective communication. Moreover, the phenomenon of gender has an important place in communication. Although there are contradictory results, it is stated in most of the studies that women and men have different communication skills and that women even show better communication skills (Korkut & Bugay, 2014).

The existence of an effective communication process depends on defining the items in a similar way, using the language in a clear, simple and understandable way, using various channels, and providing feedback systems (Araz, 2014). There are also constraints to effective communication. These are (Gordon, 2011; Ceyhun & Malkoç 2015): Guiding, giving orders, intimidating, warning, moralizing, suggesting sensible thoughts to the individual, giving lectures, teaching, suggesting solutions and giving advice, judging, criticizing, blaming, not having an opinion, giving nicknames, making fun of, making a diagnosis, making comments etc. From this point of view, effective communication and constraints in front of effective communication, when combined with the social appearance concerns of people, can lead to irreparable results, especially on young people. This study aimed to examine the relationship between social appearance anxiety and communication skills levels in students in the faculties of sports sciences. For this purpose, the research was performed on 220 students in total, where male and female students were selected as mixed.

The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS) was developed by Hart et al. in 2008 to measure the social appearance anxiety of individuals. Researchers have defined the concept of social appearance anxiety in a broad sense that includes features such as facial shape and skin colour of the individual, beyond general physical appearances such as muscle structure, weight, and height (Hart & Others, 2008). So much so that it has a more comprehensive and holistic content beyond the physical appearance (Doğan, 2010). Since one of the most distinctive features of the adolescence period is the excessive emphasis on appearance, the demand for the perfection of the youth in this period also plays a major role in shaping the research on the subject. At this point, SAAS, which was developed for university students, is frequently used to conduct related research on various subjects. In this study, it was used together with the Communication Skills Assessment Scale. The related scale was developed by Korkut in 1996, targeting the adolescence period, to measure how people are generally in their relationships. It was applied first on high school students, then on university students and 61 adults. The Developed Communication Skills Assessment Scale consists of a 5-point Likert-type and 25 items. While developing this scale, firstly high school students were determined as the target group and then it was applied to university students and 61 adults (Korkut, 1996).

Based on these scales used in the study, the setup of the study was determined as giving information about the method, presentation of the results, discussion and conclusion. Following the aim of the study, the relationship between social appearance anxiety and the communication skills of the participants with different variables was examined.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Research Design*

The methodological preference of the study was determined as the relational screening model, which is one of the general screening models. When the screening model mentioned, it can be understood all the processes that defined a situation that existed in the past or the current period as it was, and that applied for the realization of learning and the development of the desired behaviours in the person. The relational screening model, which is one of the screening models, is defined as a screening approach that aims to determine the existence of covariance between two or more variables (Karasar, 2006). This research was a relational survey-based study to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between students' social appearance anxiety and communication skills levels.

### *2.2 Sample and Data Collection*

220 students, 95 female (43.2), 125 male (56.8) studying at the Faculty of Sports Sciences, participated in the research. Students participating in the study were selected by non-probabilistic convenience sampling (Altun et al., 2004). The process of filling out the questionnaire on a voluntary basis took a mean of 20 minutes and incomplete or incorrectly filled questionnaires were determined and excluded without being included in the total number given above.

### 2.3 Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS)

This scale defined as a self-report scale developed by Hart et al. (2008) to measure the cognitive, emotional and behavioural concerns of people about their appearance (Doğan, 2010). The related scale, which was developed to measure the anxiety of people about their social appearance, was one-dimensional and consisted of 16 items. On a 5-point Likert-type scale, options from 1 to 5 were determined and the options range from 1 'Not appropriate at all' to 5 'Completely appropriate.' The Turkish adaptation of this scale was made by Doğan in 2010 and the test-retest reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .85. Choosing high-score preferences indicated high social appearance anxiety, and low scores indicated low anxiety. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .94 on average.

### 2.4 Communication Skills Assessment Scale

The Communication Skills Assessment Scale, developed by Korkut in 1996, consisted of a 5-point Likert type and 25 items. While developing this scale, firstly high school students were determined as the target audience and then it was applied to university students and 61 adults. While creating the items of the scale, the aim was for individuals to be able to respond by thinking about how they were in their relationships in general. When responding to each item in the scale, individuals were asked to choose one of the options (4) always, (3) often, (2) sometimes, (1) rarely, and (0) never. The high score obtained from the scale without reverse items meant that individuals evaluate their communication skills positively. (Korkut, 1996).

### 2.5 Analysis of Data

In this study, arithmetic mean and standard deviation values were calculated for the data of the research group. When the Skewness and Kurtosis values were examined, it was seen that the data were normally distributed. Independent sample t-test was used for the gender variable and One-way ANOVA test was used for the grade variable. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine the relationship between social appearance anxiety and communication skills. SPSS 25 statistical program was used for the analysis of the data and the level of significance was determined as  $p < 0.05$ .

Table 1: Statistical Information Describing the Research Group

Variables		F	%
Gender	Female	95	43,2
	Male	125	56,8
Grade	Grade	68	30,9
	Grade	74	33,6
	Grade	37	16,8
	Grade	31	18,6
Sports Branch	Individual	99	45,0
	Team	121	55,0

According to Table 1, "gender," "class" and "sports branch" were determined as variables in the descriptive statistics of the participants. The gender distribution was 43.2% to 56.8%, and most of the participants were male. Looking at the class distribution of the participants, it was seen that the highest attendance was from the 2nd grade (33.6%) and the least participation was from the 3rd grade (16.8%). Finally, looking at the distribution by sports branches, it was observed that those who were interested in team sports were more than those who were interested in individual sports.

## 3. Results

In the study, the relationships between the variables were examined with the t-test and the ANOVA test. The results related to gender-related social appearance anxiety and communication skills of sports science students were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: T-Test Results of Sports Science Students According to Social Appearance Anxiety and Communication Skills Scores Related to Gender Variable

	N		A.M.	S.D.	df	t	P
	Female	Male					
Social Appearance Anxiety (SAAS)	95	125	1,82	,68	218	-1,387	0,167
	125	95	1,95	,70			
Communication Principles and Basic Skills (CSBS)	95	125	1,77	,52	218	1,302	0,194
	125	95	1,88	,67			
Self-Expression (SE)	95	125	1,66	,53	218	-2,139	0,034*
	125	95	1,84	,70			
Active Listening and Non-Verbal Communication (ALNC)	95	125	1,66	,56	218	-1,946	0,053
	125	95	1,83	,69			
Willingness to Communicate (WTC)	95	125	1,64	,51	218	-1,445	0,150
	125	95	1,76	,70			
Communication Skills Overall Mean (CSOM)	95	125	1,72	,48	218	-1,672	0,96
	125	95	1,85	,64			

p<0.05

In Table 2, the t-test results according to the gender variable of the students were given. According to the gender variable, there was a statistically significant difference between the groups in the sub-dimensions of communication skills and self-expression ( $p<0.05$ ). It was determined that males had higher self-expression skills than female students. It was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the groups according to the general mean of communication skills and the sub-dimensions of Communication Principles and Basic Skills, Active Listening and Non-Verbal Communication, Willingness to Communicate, and social appearance anxiety ( $p>0.05$ ).

Table 3: ANOVA Test Results of Sports Science Students' Communication Skill Scores Depending on the Grade Category Variable

Communication Skills	Intergroup In-group Total	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	P	Tukey
Social Appearance Anxiety	Intergroup	.122	3	.041	.083	.969	
	In-group	105.393	216	.488			
	Total	105.514	219				
Communication Principles and Basic Skills	Intergroup	4.392	3	1.464	4.064	.008*	4<1,2,3
	In-group	77.816	216	.360			
	Total	82.208	219				
Self-Expression	Intergroup	5.572	3	1.857	4.844	.003*	4<1,2,3
	In-group	82.818	216	.383			
	Total	88.389	219				
Active Listening and Non-Verbal Communication	Intergroup	1.624	3	.541	1.331	.265	
	In-group	87.842	216	.407			
	Total	89.465	219				
Willingness to Communicate	Intergroup	4.522	3	1.507	3.979	.009*	4<1,2,3
	In-group	81.816	216	.379			
	Total	86.338	219				
Communication Skills Overall Mean	Intergroup	3.070	3	1.023	3.200	.024*	4<1,2,3
	In-group	69.076	216	.320			
	Total	72.146	219				
1- 1. Grade	2- 2. Grade	3- 3. Grade	4- 4. Grade				

Table 3 presented the ANOVA test results of the communication skill levels of the sports science students according to the grade variable. According to the grade variable, there was a statistically significant difference between the groups in the sub-dimensions of communication principles and basic skills, self-expression, willingness to communicate, and the general mean of communication skills ( $p < 0.05$ ). As a result of the Tukey test, which was conducted to determine between which groups the difference was, it was determined that 4th-grade students had higher communication skills than students from other classes. There was no statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of active listening and nonverbal communication sub-dimensions and social appearance anxiety scores ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 4: Correlation Table between Social Appearance Anxiety and Communication Skills

		CSBS	SE	ALNC	WTC	CSOM
SAAS	r	.344**	.356**	.368**	.277**	.368**
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	n	220	220	220	220	220

$p < 0.001$ \*\*

$p < 0.05$ \*

Table 4 showed the correlation table between the communication skills of sports science students and their social appearance anxiety. Accordingly, it was seen that there was a statistically significant difference in the general mean of communication principles and basic skills, self-expression, active listening and non-verbal communication, willingness to communicate and communication skills. It was determined that the level of communication skills of the students increased as the social appearance anxiety increased.

#### 4. Discussion

Different studies were performed to examine communication skills in the field of sports sciences. However, it can be said that there were few studies that deal with communication skills together with social appearance anxiety (Dumangöz, 2021). In this study, the relationship between social appearance anxiety and communication skills levels of Faculty of Sport Sciences students was examined.

When the results of the study were examined, it was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of communication skills related to gender variable and self-expression sub-dimensions of communication skills ( $p < 0.05$ ). Accordingly, it was determined that males had higher self-expression skills than female students. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the groups according to the general mean of communication skills and the sub-dimensions of Communication Principles and Basic Skills, Active Listening and Non-Verbal Communication, and Willingness to Communicate ( $p > 0.05$ ). In the study of Gülbahar and Sivacı (2018), no significant difference was found in the levels of self-expression and communication skills. However, the mean rank of the total score of the scale was higher for women than for men. Similarly, in the studies Akan and Mehrdad (2019) conducted on school principals and Kayışoğlu, Doğan and Çetin (2014) youth camp leader candidates, no significant difference was found in the levels of communication skills and all sub-dimensions depending on gender. Contrary to the results of the study, Akgün and Çetin (2018) university students and Akyol (2019) found a significant difference depending on the gender variable in their studies on the communication skills of different faculty students.

In the study, it was found that there was no statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of social appearance anxiety related to gender ( $p > 0.05$ ). Similarly, in the study of Göksel et al. (2018) on individuals receiving sports services, Türker et al. (2018) on individuals doing sports, and Toprak and Saraç (2018) on athletes, no significant difference was found depending on the gender variable. Contrary to the study, Soyulu, Atik, and Öçalan (2017) found that males had higher social appearance anxiety compared to females in their study on adolescents. Çetinkaya, Gülaçtı, and Çiftçi (2019) also found a significant difference depending on the gender variable in their studies on high school students.

According to the class variable, there was a statistically significant difference between the groups in the sub-dimensions of communication principles and basic skills, self-expression, willingness to communicate, and the general mean of communication skills ( $p < 0.05$ ). As a result of the Tukey test, it was understood that the 4th-grade students had higher communication skills than the students studying in other classes. There was no statistically significant difference between the groups in the sub-dimensions of active listening and nonverbal communication ( $p > 0.05$ ). In the study of Akçam, Kanbay, and Işık (2019) on nursing students, it was determined that although the mean score of first-year students was higher than that of fourth-year students, and no statistically significant difference was found. Similarly, in the study conducted by Bingöl and Demir (2011), it was not found statistically significant although the mean scores of communication skills of the first and third-grade nursing students were higher than the second and fourth grades.

When the relationship between the communication skills of sports science students and social appearance anxiety was examined, it was seen that there was a statistically significant difference in the general mean of communication principles and basic skills, self-expression, active listening and non-verbal communication, willingness to communicate and communication skills. It was determined that the level of communication skills of the students increased as the social appearance anxiety increased. Contrary to the results obtained in the study, Gökçe and Keçeci (2020) stated that there was a negative relationship between communication skills and all sub-dimensions and social appearance anxiety in their study on individuals participating in physical activity, and it was determined that as social appearance anxiety increased, communication skills decreased.

## 5. Conclusion

As a result of the research, there was a significant difference in the sub-dimension of self-expression in communication skills in terms of gender, while no significant difference was found in the other sub-dimensions. In terms of grade category, a significant difference was found in communication skills. It has been determined that fourth-grade students had higher communication skills than those studying in other grades. Moreover, it was understood that there were significant differences between social appearance anxiety and communication skills.

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