

# An Investigation of Relationship Between Alexithymia and Ego-Oriented Levels of Students at The Faculty of Sports Sciences

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim:** The aim of this study is to investigate of students sport science faculty relationship between on their alexithymia status and ego-oriented goals levels to compare them according to different demographic variables.

**Methods:** For data collection, "Alexithymia Scale" was used which was developed by Bagby et al. <sup>5</sup> and was adapted to turkish by Güleç et al. <sup>6</sup> For data collection, "Task and Ego Oriented Scale" was used which was developed by Duda. <sup>7</sup> and was adapted to turkish by Toros and Yetim <sup>8</sup> to 416 participants in total consisting of 138 female and 278 male students.

For data analysis, through SPSS statistical packet program, frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, one-way anova, tukey, pearson correlation analyze were performed.

**Results:** A highly significant negative correlation was found between the participants' ego orientation averages and their alexithymia averages. ( $r = -.826$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Conclusion:** According to this; As the participants' alexithymia levels increased, their ego orientation decreased; in other words, it was concluded that as ego orientations increased, alexithymia levels decreased.

**Keywords:** Alexithymia, Ego-oriented, Physical Educaiton, Sport.

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of alexithymia has emerged by the American psychiatrist Sifneos when patients detect their inability to recognized and used their psychosomatic feelings. People with alexithymia are emotionally challenged, they cannot accept that an emotional challenge occurs and they enhance a bodily defense by not being able to express their emotions. This is not only a problem specific to psychosomatic individuals, but also a situation seen in normal people. <sup>1</sup>

As a normal person, making contact healthy relationships in the society; In order to be accepted in the society, he must be able to express his feelings and himself. Despite this situation; because of many different factors, individuals may not be able to express their feelings. <sup>2</sup>

Already, alexithymia means recognizing emotions but experiencing difficulties in expressing them. Considering the importance of physical elements in sports as well as mental and psychological factors affect performance; The concept of alexithymia is a situation that should be emphasized. One of the most important expressions of the intensity of emotion in sports is the ego. Ego is the tendency to overestimate oneself or to see superior to others. An ego-oriented athlete achieves a sense of accomplishment when he excels over others. For him, being described as the "best" gives pleasure and indisputably constantly wants to be the best. <sup>3</sup>

According to one study, athletes with high ego orientation are reluctant to compete when they feel they can't succeed. Such athletes see winning or outmanoeuvre as greatness and They want to do whatever it takes to win, even if it means breaking the rules. <sup>4</sup>

The aim of our study is to investigate the state of the ego, which is a concept related to emotion such as alexithymia, in athletes and to evaluate its relationship with each other. It is thought that people who a social being and

sports as a social phenomenon will shed light on their emotional orientation.

## MATERIAL & METHODS

The aim of this study is to investigate of students sport science faculty relationship between on their alexithymia status and ego-oriented goals levels to compare them according to different demographic variables.

While the population of the research consisted of students at Atatürk University Faculty of Sport Sciences, the sample group consisted of 416 volunteer students.

For data collection, "Alexithymia Scale" was used which was developed by Bagby et al. <sup>5</sup> and was adapted to turkish by Güleç et al. <sup>6</sup> For data collection, "Task and Ego Oriented Scale" was used which was developed by Duda. <sup>7</sup> and was adapted to turkish by Toros and Yetim <sup>8</sup> to 416 participants in total consisting of 138 female and 278 male students.

A score between 20-100 can be obtained from the alexithymia scale; A score of 51 and below indicates low, borderline between 51-61 and a high level of alexithymia above 61.

In the analysis of the obtained data, SPSS program was used in computer environment and the level of significance was taken as ( $p < 0.05$ ).

For data analysis, through SPSS statistical packet program, frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, one-way anova, tukey, pearson correlation analyze were performed.

## RESULTS

When the table 1 is analyzed in terms of gender, it is seen that % 66.8 of the participants are men, %33.2 are women; in terms of age %26.2 are 20 years and under, %53.4 are between 21-25 ages, %20.4 are 26 age and over; in terms of department %27.4 are coaching, %21.9 are physical education training, %23.6 are sport management, %27.1

are recreation; in terms of grades, it is seen that %22.1 participants are at Grade 1, %23.8 are at Grade 2, %29.1 are at Grade 3 and %25 are at Grade 4.

Table 1. Participants' Information in terms of Demographical Features

| Gender                      | N   | %    |
|-----------------------------|-----|------|
| Men                         | 278 | 66.8 |
| Women                       | 138 | 33.2 |
| Age                         | N   | %    |
| 20 years and under          | 109 | 26.2 |
| Between 21-25 ages          | 222 | 53.4 |
| Age 26 and over             | 85  | 20.4 |
| Department                  | N   | %    |
| Coaching                    | 114 | 27.4 |
| Physical Education Training | 91  | 21.9 |
| Sport Management            | 98  | 23.6 |
| Recreation                  | 113 | 27.1 |
| Grades                      | N   | %    |
| Grade 1                     | 92  | 22.1 |
| Grade 2                     | 99  | 23.8 |
| Grade 3                     | 121 | 29.1 |
| Grade 4                     | 104 | 25   |
| Total                       | 416 | 100  |

Table 2. Comparison Between the Participants Level of Alexithymia and Ego-Oriented Depending on Gender

| Sub Dimension | Gender  | Mean  | s.d   | t      | p     |
|---------------|---------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| Alexithymia   | Women   | 63.16 | ,147  | -,347  | ,000* |
|               | Men     | 61.52 | ,263  |        |       |
| Ego-Oriented  | Women   | 3.30  | ,327  | -1,237 | ,000* |
|               | Men     | 3.66  | ,291  |        |       |
| Sub Dimension | Grades  | Mean  | s.d   | f      | p     |
| Alexithymia   | Grade 1 | 63,80 | ,916  | 1,227  | ,001* |
|               | Grade 2 | 64,75 | ,987  |        |       |
|               | Grade 3 | 64,77 | ,971  |        |       |
|               | Grade 4 | 65,56 | 1,017 |        |       |
| Ego-Oriented  | Grade 1 | 3,66  | 1,036 | 4,636  | ,004* |
|               | Grade 2 | 3,41  | 1,096 |        |       |
|               | Grade 3 | 3,45  | 1,048 |        |       |
|               | Grade 4 | 3,12  | 1,041 |        |       |

\*(p<0,05)

When the datas are analyzed, there are meaningful dissimilarities in Alexithymia levels (p=,000) and Ego-Oriented (p=,000) levels depending on gender of participants.

According to this data, women (x=63,16±,147) have a higher alexithymia than men participants (x=61,52±,263). It is seen that men (x=3,66±,291) have a higher ego-oriented than women (x =3,30±,327)

Table 3. Comparison Between the Participants Level of Alexithymia and Ego-Oriented Depending on Age

| Sub Dimension | Age                | Mean  | s.d  | f    | p     |
|---------------|--------------------|-------|------|------|-------|
| Alexithymia   | 20 years and under | 63,49 | ,721 | ,231 | ,000* |
|               | Between 21-25 ages | 64,52 | ,753 |      |       |
|               | Age 26 and over    | 65,37 | ,796 |      |       |
| Ego-Oriented  | 20 years and under | 3,61  | ,312 | ,324 | ,000* |
|               | Between 21-25 ages | 3,53  | ,356 |      |       |
|               | Age 26 and over    | 3,35  | ,244 |      |       |

\*(p<0,05)

When the datas are analyzed, there are meaningful dissimilarities in Alexithymia levels (p=,000) and Ego-

Oriented (p=,000) levels depending on age of participants.

According to this data, age 26 and over (X=65,37±,796) have a higher alexithymia than 20 years and under participants (X=63,49±,721). It is seen that 20 years and under (X=3,61±,312) have a higher ego-oriented than age 26 and over (X=3,35±,244).

Table 4. Comparison Between the Participants Level of Alexithymia and Ego-Oriented Depending on Department

| Sub Dimension | Department                | Mean         | s.d    | f    | p    |
|---------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------|------|------|
| Alexithymia   | Physical Education Tr.    | 62,93        | ,803   | ,792 | ,134 |
|               | Sport Management Coaching | 63,11        | ,838   |      |      |
|               | Recreation                | 62,89        | 1,049  |      |      |
|               |                           | 63,17        | ,991   |      |      |
| Ego-Oriented  | Physical Education Tr.    | 3,55         | ,152   | ,928 | ,216 |
|               | Sport Management Coaching | 3,66         | ,171   |      |      |
|               | Recreation                | 3,58         | ,119   |      |      |
|               |                           | 3,49         | ,181   |      |      |
| Alexithymia   | Pearson Korelasyonu       | Ego-Oriented |        |      |      |
|               | P                         | 1000         | ,826** |      |      |
| Ego-Oriented  | P                         | 1000         | ,000   |      |      |
|               | N                         | 416          | 416    |      |      |

\*(p<0,05)

When the datas are analyzed, there are no meaningful dissimilarities in Alexithymia levels (p=,134) and Ego-Oriented (p=,216) levels depending on department of participants (p>,0.05).

When the datas are analyzed, there are meaningful dissimilarities in Alexithymia levels (p=,001) and Ego-Oriented (p=,004) levels depending on grades of participants.

According to this data, grade 1 (x=65,56±1,017) have a higher alexithymia than grade 4 participants (x=63,80±,916). It is seen that grade 4 (x=3,66±1,036) have a higher ego-oriented than grade 1 (x=3,12±1,041)

When the data are examined, it is seen that there is a strong and significant positive relationship between the participants' Alexithymia and Ego-Oriented (r=.826, p<0.01). According to this data, as the Alexithymia of the participants increases; It is seen that Ego-Oriented increase, and as Ego-Oriented decrease, Alexithymia decrease.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When comparing the alexithymia levels of the participants according to their gender, significant differences were found in favor of women. As a characteristic of the society in which women live, this situation may be related to being taught from a young age to pay more attention than boys in showing their emotions. Social life may be a determining factor in the gender variable. The fact that there are studies in the international literature in which men's alexithymia levels are higher in different societies also supports our interpretation. (5, 9,10) In some studies, no significant

differences were found between gender and alexithymia levels. <sup>(11, 12,13)</sup>

When comparing the ego orientations of the participants according to their genders, significant differences were found in favor of men. Considering that men experience less alexithymia; this situation may have caused their ego levels to be high because they can reflect their emotions more easily than women.

Significant differences were found in the comparison of alexithymia levels according to the age of the participants. According to this, It was concluded that participants aged 26 and over had a higher level of alexithymia than participants aged 20 and younger. This situation can be interpreted as individuals who have had emotionally negative experiences in life feel more alexithymia with age. Yıldız, in her master's thesis study on students; concluded that alexithymia levels decrease with age. This situation is contradicted with our findings. <sup>14</sup>

Significant differences were found in the comparison of the ego orientations of the participants according to their ages. According to this, it is seen that participants aged 20 and under have higher ego levels than participants aged 26 and over. Considering in our study that alexithymia increases with age; It can be interpreted that individuals who have difficulty in expressing their feelings may have become less egoistic with age.

Significant differences were found in the comparison of the alexithymia levels of the participants according to their grades. According to this; It is seen that 4th grade students have more alexithymia than 1st grade students. This may be due to the fact that the negative situations that individuals in higher classes may have experienced more and this may cause alexithymia.

A strong negative correlation was found between the participants' alexithymia and ego orientations. Accordingly, it is seen that individuals with alexithymia display an attitude far from ego orientation; It is seen that individuals who do not have alexithymia have ego orientation. If we interpret Alexithymia as difficulty in expressing emotions and ego as seeing oneself superior to others; The decrease in ego with the increase of alexithymia can be interpreted as emotions also affect the ego.

As a result, a high level of alexithymia was detected in our study on individuals who received training on sports, which is a social phenomenon. Considering that sport is a concept on socialization, communication, and interaction; It is thought-provoking that individuals who are educated on this subject feel alexithymia. If these individuals have problems in conveying their feelings when they finish school, it will be very difficult for them to succeed in their task.

Therefore, in order to face the problems faced by individuals, personal development seminars can be organized to increase their awareness about their interpersonal relationships, especially their own behaviors, and to offer a different perspective on communication, team and leadership development.

By determining the factors that will cause alexithymia; In particular, psychological counseling services can be provided on a regular basis in order to relieve their anxieties about the social environment they are in.

A conference on "emotion and human" can be given

to individuals on the fact that leaving their emotions in the inner world will cause psychological problems, and that self-expression is a social necessity. Comparisons can be made for different demographic variables such as income level, place of residence, number of siblings in the family. Alexithymia can be researched on different subjects such as anxiety, motivation, satisfaction, empathy.

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