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The Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity as a Psychological Response to Social Physique Anxiety Among Students of the Institutes of Physical Education and Sports

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Abstract:

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between the tendency to avoid physical activity and social physique anxiety among students of institutes of physical education and sports. The study adopted a descriptive correlational approach using the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS) and the Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS). The sample consisted of 243 students from the Institute of Physical Education and Sports, including 150 males and 93 females. The findings revealed a relatively high level of physical activity avoidance tendency and a low level of social physique anxiety among participants. The results also indicated statistically significant gender differences in both variables in favor of females. Furthermore, a positive and statistically significant correlation was found between physical activity avoidance tendency and social physique anxiety.

Keywords: Physical activity avoidance tendency, social physique anxiety, body image, physical activity, sport psychology, physical education students.

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1. Introduction and Research Problem

Recent research in sport psychology has increasingly focused on the psychological and social factors influencing participation in physical activity, particularly among university students and students enrolled in institutes of physical education and sport, who represent the population most actively engaged in physical activity from both educational and practical perspectives. Accordingly, interest in sport participation has expanded beyond its physical and physiological dimensions to encompass psychological and emotional aspects, including body image, self-confidence, and the social perception of physical appearance. Within this context, Physical Activity Avoidance has emerged as a contemporary psychological construct describing an individual's tendency to withdraw from or avoid situations involving physical activity due to dissatisfaction with body appearance or fear of negative evaluation by others during exercise. Consequently, this construct has received increasing attention in recent sport psychology literature (Weinberg & Gould, 2019, p. 83).

Although physical activity is widely recognized as an effective means of promoting psychological and social well-being, some individuals develop negative attitudes toward participation because of appearance-related pressures, particularly in societies that emphasize the ideal body image. Students enrolled in institutes of physical education and sport may be especially vulnerable to such pressures because of their continuous exposure to the sporting environment, where physical competence and body appearance are sometimes considered important evaluation criteria. Consequently, some students may avoid participation in practical activities or withdraw from sport-related situations due to fear of criticism or negative evaluation by others

In parallel with these developments, the concept of Social Physique Anxiety (SPA) has emerged as a prominent psychological construct referring to the anxiety individuals experience when they believe that others are observing or evaluating their physical appearance, particularly in social or sport settings. Numerous studies have demonstrated that elevated levels of Social Physique Anxiety are associated with reduced sport participation, lower self-confidence, and diminished motivation to engage in physical activity (Hart, Leary, & Rejeski, 1989, p. 98).

Furthermore, contemporary research has shown that Social Physique Anxiety is associated with a range of adverse psychological and behavioral outcomes, including social withdrawal, poor psychological adjustment, and avoidance of activities that require exposing one's body in the presence of others, particularly

among university students. Researchers have suggested that the sporting environment may itself become a source of psychological stress when it promotes social comparison or appearance-related criticism, thereby undermining students' sense of psychological security during physical activity (Sabiston et al., 2014, p. 33).

Moreover, research in sport psychology has consistently identified body image and physical self-esteem as important determinants of students' attitudes toward physical activity. In this regard, Mohamed Hassan Allawi (2002, p. 214) argued that a negative perception of one's body image may reduce self-confidence and lead individuals to avoid social and sport situations that involve interaction with others, particularly when accompanied by fear of criticism or ridicule. Likewise, Osama Kamel Rateb (2007, p. 187) emphasized that appearance-related anxiety constitutes a psychological factor that directly influences both achievement motivation in sport and engagement in physical activity.

Despite the substantial advancement of international research in this field, the Arab context continues to exhibit a clear shortage of studies examining the relationship between Physical Activity Avoidance and Social Physique Anxiety, particularly among students enrolled in institutes of physical education and sport. Most Arabic studies have focused on sport anxiety or body image in general, while giving limited attention to contemporary psychological constructs associated with physical activity avoidance. Moreover, the development of recently validated instruments, such as the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS), has provided researchers with a more accurate and comprehensive means of assessing this construct within university and sport settings.

Given the unique psychological and social challenges associated with university life, together with the growing influence of social media on idealized body image perceptions, many students experience appearance-related psychological pressures that may adversely affect their sport behavior and participation in physical activity. Accordingly, investigating the relationship between Physical Activity Avoidance and Social Physique Anxiety among students of institutes of physical education and sport is of considerable importance, as a better understanding of this relationship may contribute to the development of psychological counseling and intervention programs aimed at enhancing psychological well-being and promoting greater engagement in physical activity.

Based on the foregoing, the present study seeks to address the following research questions.

2. Research Question

Is there a statistically significant relationship between Physical Activity Avoidance and Social Physique Anxiety among students of institutes of physical education and sport?

2.1. Research Sub-questions

What are the levels of Physical Activity Avoidance and Social Physique Anxiety among students of institutes of physical education and sport?

Are there significant gender differences in Physical Activity Avoidance and Social Physique Anxiety among students of institutes of physical education and sport?

Is there a significant correlation between Physical Activity Avoidance and Social Physique Anxiety among students of institutes of physical education and sport?

3. Research Hypothesis

There is a statistically significant relationship between Physical Activity Avoidance and Social Physique Anxiety among students of institutes of physical education and sport.

3.1. Research Sub-hypotheses

Students of institutes of physical education and sport exhibit a high level of Physical Activity Avoidance and a low level of Social Physique Anxiety.

There are significant gender differences in Physical Activity Avoidance and Social Physique Anxiety among students of institutes of physical education and sport.

There is a statistically significant correlation between Physical Activity Avoidance and Social Physique Anxiety among students of institutes of physical education and sport.

4. Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to:

- ✓ Examine the relationship between Physical Activity Avoidance and Social Physique Anxiety among students of institutes of physical education and sport.
- ✓ Determine the level of Physical Activity Avoidance among students of sport sciences.
- ✓ Assess the level of Social Physique Anxiety among the study participants.
- ✓ Identify gender differences in the two study variables.

5. Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study lies in its investigation of relatively recent psychological constructs in the field of sport psychology, particularly Physical Activity Avoidance, which has recently emerged in the international literature as a psychological construct associated with fear of social evaluation and appearance-related stigma. Furthermore, the study is important because it integrates the psychological dimension of body image with the behavioral dimension of sport participation, reflecting a contemporary direction in sport and exercise psychology research. This issue has become increasingly relevant given the growing influence of social media on the formation of idealized body image perceptions among university students.

6. Definition of Terms

6.1. Physical Activity Avoidance

Bevan et al. (2022, p. 4) define Physical Activity Avoidance as "an individual's tendency to avoid or withdraw from physical activity and sport because of concerns related to body appearance or weight- and appearance-related stigma." Similarly, Vartanian and Novak (2022, p. 12) describe it as "the psychological and social barriers that reduce an individual's participation in physical activity due to body image concerns and fear of negative evaluation by others." From an Arab sport psychology perspective, Mohamed Hassan Allawi (2002, p. 215) argues that avoidance of sport participation may result from psychological factors such as fear of failure, low self-confidence, or feelings of physical inadequacy in the presence of others. In the present study, Physical Activity Avoidance refers operationally to the total score obtained by participants on the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS).

6.2. Social Physique Anxiety

Hart, Leary, and Rejeski (1989, p. 95) define Social Physique Anxiety as "a state of anxiety and discomfort experienced when individuals believe that others are negatively evaluating their physical appearance." Likewise, Cash (2012, p. 161) considers it "a form of social anxiety associated with body image in which individuals become highly sensitive to how others perceive their physical appearance." More recently, Donofre et al. (2023, p. 3) reported that Social Physique Anxiety is associated with reduced psychological comfort during physical activity, particularly in environments characterized by body comparison and social evaluation.

7. Previous Studies

Bevan et al. (2022) conducted a study entitled "Weight Stigma, Avoidance of Physical Activity and Sport: Development of a Scale and Examination of Associated Correlates." The study aimed to develop the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS) and examine its psychometric properties among university students. A descriptive research design was employed with a sample of 581 university students. The findings indicated that appearance anxiety and weight-related stigma were positively associated with physical activity avoidance and reduced sport participation. Moreover, the TAPAS demonstrated excellent validity and reliability.

Donofre et al. (2023) conducted a study entitled "The Social Appearance Anxiety Scale: A Psychometric Study and Evaluation of the Influence of Individual Characteristics on Social Appearance Anxiety." The study aimed to evaluate the psychometric properties of the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS) among physically active adults in Brazil. The findings revealed that higher levels of Social Appearance Anxiety were associated with lower psychological comfort during physical activity.

Lin et al. (2023) conducted a study entitled "The Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS): Rasch Analysis and Differential Item Functioning Among a Chinese University Sample." The study examined the psychometric properties of the TAPAS using the Rasch measurement model among Chinese university students. The results demonstrated a robust factorial structure together with high validity and reliability, confirming the instrument's effectiveness in assessing appearance- and weight-related physical activity avoidance.

Sabiston et al. (2014) conducted a study entitled "Body Image, Physical Activity, and Sport: A Scoping Review." The study reviewed the relationship between body image and participation in physical activity and sport. The findings indicated that appearance-related concerns negatively influenced sport participation and motivation for physical activity, particularly among adolescents and women.

Kalogiannis and **Papaioannou** (2007) conducted a study entitled "Development of a Scale to Assess Appearance Anxiety Among Physical Education Students." The study aimed to develop an instrument for measuring appearance anxiety during physical education classes. The results revealed a strong association between appearance anxiety, avoidance of sport participation, and lower levels of physical self-confidence.

8. Research Methodology

8.1. Research Design

Scientific research methodology provides a systematic framework that enables researchers to obtain accurate and reliable knowledge about the phenomena under investigation through sequential procedures involving careful observation, data collection, logical analysis, and objective interpretation of findings. A scientific approach is characterized by objectivity, rigor, and methodological consistency. Given the nature and objectives of the present study, a descriptive research design was adopted, as it is considered the most appropriate approach for examining the relationships among the study variables without manipulating them.

8.2. Study Population

The study population consisted of students enrolled in Institutes of Physical Education and Sport during the 2025–2026 academic year. Participants were full-time undergraduate students from different academic levels and specializations within the institutes of physical education and sport.

8.3. Study Sample

The final sample comprised 243 undergraduate students from Institutes of Physical Education and Sport who completed the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS) and the Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS). The sample included 150 male students (61.7%) and 93 female students (38.3%).

All participants belonged to the university environment and were receiving both theoretical and practical training in physical education and sport.

Table 1. Distribution of the Study Sample by Gender

University	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total
University of Algiers 3	90 (60%)	47 (51%)	137
University of Sétif	20 (13%)	14 (15%)	34
University of M'Sila	15 (10%)	12 (13%)	27
University of Tissemsilt	25 (17%)	20 (21%)	45
Total	150 (100%)	93 (100%)	243

8.4. Sampling Procedure

A simple random sampling technique was employed to select the participants. This method ensured that every member of the study population had an equal probability of selection, thereby minimizing sampling bias and enhancing the representativeness and generalizability of the findings.

9. Study Delimitations

9.1. Temporal Delimitation

The study was conducted during the 2025–2026 academic year. Data collection and the administration of the research instruments were carried out between January and April 2026.

9.2. Geographical Delimitation

The study was conducted at the Institutes of Physical Education and Sport affiliated with the following Algerian universities: University of Algiers 3, University of Sétif, University of M'Sila, and University of Tissemsilt.

9.3. Participant Delimitation

The study was limited to male and female undergraduate students who were regularly enrolled in the participating Institutes of Physical Education and Sport.

10. Research Instruments

10.1. The Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS)

The Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS) is a recently developed instrument in the field of sport psychology. It was developed by Bevan et al. (2022) to assess individuals' tendency to avoid participation in physical

activity and sport because of psychological factors related to body image and weight- or appearance-related stigma. The scale was developed through a rigorous theoretical and psychometric validation process, including factor analysis, which demonstrated its validity for assessing physical activity avoidance across different sport settings. The instrument consists of 10 items measuring individuals' tendency to avoid physical activity and sport (Bevan et al., 2022, p. 4).

10.1.1. Scoring Procedure: Responses are rated using a five-point Likert scale, as follows:

Table 2. Scoring System for the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS)

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Score	1	2	3	4	5

10.1.2. Scoring Key: All items are positively keyed (i.e., no reverse-scored items). The total score is obtained by summing the responses to all 10 items, yielding a possible score ranging from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating a greater tendency to avoid physical activity and sport.

10.1.3. Interpretation of TAPAS Scores

The total scores on the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS) were interpreted as follows:

Table 3. Interpretation of TAPAS Scores

Score Range	Interpretation
10–23	Low tendency to avoid physical activity
24–37	Moderate tendency to avoid physical activity
38–50	High tendency to avoid physical activity

10.2. Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS)

The Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS) is one of the most widely used instruments in sport and exercise psychology. It was developed by Hart, Leary, and Rejeski (1989) to assess anxiety arising from individuals' concerns about others evaluating their physical appearance in social and sport settings. The scale measures the degree of anxiety and discomfort experienced when individuals perceive that their bodies are being observed or judged by others. The version adopted in the present study consists of 12 items (Hart et al., 1989, p. 95).

10.2.1. Scoring Procedure: Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, as presented below.

Table 4. Scoring System for the Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS)

Response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Score	1	2	3	4	5

10.2.2. Scoring Key: In this version of the SPAS, several positively worded items reflecting psychological comfort are reverse-scored. The scoring procedure is as follows:

A score of 5 is recoded as 1. /4 is recoded as 2. /3 remains unchanged. /2 is recoded as 4. /1 is recoded as 5.

The total score is obtained by summing the scores across all items, yielding a possible range from 12 to 60, with higher scores indicating greater Social Physique Anxiety.

10.2.3. Interpretation of SPAS Scores

Table 5. Interpretation of SPAS Scores

Score Range	Interpretation
12–28	Low Social Physique Anxiety
29–44	Moderate Social Physique Anxiety
45–60	High Social Physique Anxiety

10.3. Psychometric Properties of the Research Instruments

10.3.1. Validity

Construct validity was examined using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), one of the most robust contemporary statistical techniques for evaluating the extent to which an observed measurement model fits the hypothesized theoretical structure. In the present study, CFA was performed for both the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS) and the Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS) using a pilot sample of 30 students from the Institute of Physical Education and Sport at the University of Algiers 3. The analysis was conducted to verify the adequacy of the proposed factorial structures and to establish the construct validity of both instruments before their administration to the main study sample.

10.3.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS)

A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to examine the factorial structure of the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Sport Scale (TAPAS). The results are presented below.

Table 6. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the TAPAS Measurement Model

Fit Index	Obtained Value	Recommended Value	Evaluation
χ^2/df	1.92	< 3.00	Very Good
CFI	0.94	≥ 0.90	Very Good
TLI	0.92	≥ 0.90	Good
RMSEA	0.056	< 0.08	Very Good
SRMR	0.048	< 0.08	Excellent

The CFA results indicated that the proposed single-factor model provided a satisfactory fit to the observed data. The chi-square to degrees-of-freedom ratio (χ^2/df = 1.92) was well below the recommended threshold of 3.0, indicating an acceptable model fit. Likewise, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.94) and the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI = 0.92) exceeded the recommended criterion of 0.90, demonstrating a good fit relative to the null model. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.056) indicated a low approximation error, while the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR = 0.048) reflected a small discrepancy between the observed and predicted covariance matrices. Collectively, these findings support the adequacy of the one-factor measurement model.

10.3.3. Factor Loadings

Table 7. Standardized Factor Loadings for the TAPAS

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Factor Loading	0.71	0.74	0.69	0.78	0.72	0.70	0.76	0.73	0.75	0.79

The standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.69 to 0.79, all exceeding the recommended minimum value of 0.50. These results indicate that every item made a substantial contribution to the underlying latent construct of Physical Activity Avoidance, providing further evidence for the construct validity of the TAPAS.

10.3.4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS)

The factorial structure of the Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS) was also evaluated using a single-factor confirmatory factor analysis, assuming that the twelve items represent a single latent construct, namely Social Physique Anxiety.

Table 8. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the SPAS Measurement Model

Fit Index	Obtained Value	Recommended Value	Evaluation
χ^2/df	2.11	< 3.00	Good
CFI	0.93	≥ 0.90	Very Good
TLI	0.91	≥ 0.90	Good
RMSEA	0.061	< 0.08	Acceptable
SRMR	0.052	< 0.08	Very Good

Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for the SPAS

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS) indicated that the proposed one-factor model demonstrated a satisfactory fit to the empirical data. The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio was acceptable (χ^2/df = 2.11), indicating a good correspondence between the hypothesized model and the observed data. Furthermore, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.93) and the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI = 0.91) exceeded the recommended threshold, supporting the adequacy of the proposed model relative to the baseline model. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.061) fell within the acceptable range, indicating a low approximation error, while the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR = 0.052) reflected a satisfactory level of residual fit. Collectively, these fit indices provide strong evidence for the construct validity of the proposed measurement model.

5.3.10. Factor Loadings

Table 9. Standardized Factor Loadings of the SPAS Items

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Factor Loading	0.72	0.81	0.70	0.77	0.74	0.76	0.71	0.75	0.69	0.78	0.73	0.82

The standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.69 to 0.82, indicating strong associations between the observed items and the underlying latent construct. These values provide robust evidence of the scale's factorial validity and demonstrate that all items contribute meaningfully to the measurement of social physique anxiety. Accordingly, the SPAS exhibited a stable unidimensional factor structure, supporting its suitability for assessing social physique anxiety within the Algerian context.

6.3.10. Reliability

7.3.10. Reliability of the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity Scale (TAPAS)

Table 10. Internal Consistency Reliability of the TAPAS Using Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	Sample Size	Number of Items
0.86	30	10

As presented in Table 10, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the TAPAS was 0.86, exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 commonly recommended in psychological and sport science research. This result indicates a high level of internal consistency reliability, confirming that the scale provides stable and consistent measurements. Therefore, the TAPAS can be considered a reliable instrument for use in the present field study.

8.3.10. Reliability of the Social Physique Anxiety Scale (SPAS)

Table 11. Internal Consistency Reliability of the SPAS Using Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	Sample Size	Number of Items
0.89	30	12

Table 11 shows that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the SPAS reached 0.89, indicating excellent internal consistency reliability. This value reflects a high degree of homogeneity among the scale items and confirms that the instrument consistently measures the intended construct. Consequently, the SPAS can be confidently employed as a reliable measure of social physique anxiety in the present study.

11. Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of the Research Hypotheses

11.1. Presentation and Analysis of the First Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Students of the Institute of Physical Education and Sports exhibit a high level of tendency to avoid physical activity and a low level of social physique anxiety.

The hypothesis was examined as follows:

Table 12. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity	3.72	0.58	High
Social Physique Anxiety	2.41	0.63	Low

Interpretation of Table 12

The results presented in Table 12 indicate that the mean score for the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity was 3.72 (SD = 0.58), reflecting a high level among the participants. In contrast, the mean score for Social Physique Anxiety was 2.41 (SD = 0.63), indicating a relatively low level.

These findings suggest that although the students demonstrated a relatively high tendency to avoid certain forms of physical activity, they reported low levels of anxiety related to the evaluation of their physical appearance. This pattern may be attributed to factors other than physique-related concerns, such as academic workload, reduced motivation, or psychological fatigue associated with intensive sports training and participation.

11.1.1. Discussion of the First Hypothesis

The findings revealed that students enrolled in Institutes of Physical Education and Sports exhibited a relatively high tendency to avoid physical activity. Although this finding may initially appear inconsistent with the nature of their academic specialization, it can be interpreted in light of the psychological and social demands associated with the university sport environment. Specifically, students may experience psychological exhaustion or stress resulting from continuous evaluation of both their athletic performance and physical appearance, which may contribute to the development of avoidant behaviors toward certain forms of physical activity.

Conversely, the relatively low level of Social Physique Anxiety may be explained by the fact that these students are regularly exposed to sport and physical activity environments. Such continuous exposure is likely to enhance their adaptation to social evaluation of physical appearance, making them less vulnerable to appearance-related anxiety than individuals who do not regularly engage in sport.

These findings are consistent with those reported by Greenleaf and Rodriguez (2020), who suggested that sustained engagement in physical activity may reduce appearance-related anxiety, even when individuals exhibit avoidant tendencies driven by factors unrelated to body image (Greenleaf & Rodriguez, 2020, p. 5). The present findings are also partially consistent with those of Thomas F. Cash (2012), who argued that a positive body image contributes to lower levels of appearance-based social anxiety, particularly among individuals who engage regularly in physical activity.

11.2. Presentation and Analysis of the Second Hypothesis

Hypothesis 2: There are significant differences in the levels of tendency to avoid physical activity and social physique anxiety among students of the Institutes of Physical Education and Sports according to gender.

The hypothesis was examined as follows.

11.2.1. Results for the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity Scale

Table 13. Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Male and Female Students on the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity

Gender	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	t Value	p Value	Significance Level
Male	150	3.51	0.56	3.84	0.001	0.05
Female	93	3.89	0.61			

Interpretation of Table 13

The results presented in Table 13 indicate statistically significant gender differences in the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity. Male students obtained a mean score of 3.51 (SD = 0.56), whereas female students reported a higher mean score of 3.89 (SD = 0.61). The independent samples t-test yielded a value of t =

3.84 with a significance level of p = 0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level. These findings suggest that female students exhibit a greater tendency to avoid physical activity than their male counterparts. This difference may be associated with several psychological and social factors, including greater sensitivity to others' evaluations and heightened concerns about criticism or embarrassment related to physical appearance during sports participation.

11.2.2. Results for the Social Physique Anxiety Scale

Table 14. Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Male and Female Students on Social Physique Anxiety

Gender	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	t Value	p Value	Significance Level
Male	150	2.28	0.59	4.27	<0.001	0.05
Female	93	2.63	0.65			

Interpretation of Table 14

The findings presented in Table 14 reveal statistically significant gender differences in Social Physique Anxiety. Male students obtained a mean score of 2.28 (SD = 0.59), whereas female students achieved a higher mean score of 2.63 (SD = 0.65). The independent samples t-test produced a value of t = 4.27 with p < 0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference. These results demonstrate that female students experience higher levels of social physique anxiety than male students, reflecting greater psychological sensitivity to others' evaluations of their physical appearance. This finding may be explained by the fact that women generally place greater importance on body image and are more frequently exposed to societal pressures regarding beauty ideals and body shape, thereby increasing appearance-related anxiety in both social and sporting contexts.

11.2.3. Discussion of the Second Hypothesis

The findings demonstrated statistically significant gender differences in both the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Social Physique Anxiety, with female students reporting significantly higher levels than males on both variables. These results may be explained by the greater sensitivity of females to external evaluations of physical appearance, largely influenced by prevailing social norms and cultural standards of beauty. Moreover, social media platforms and media portrayals of the

ideal body substantially reinforce appearance-related concerns among females, potentially leading them to avoid certain forms of physical activity that involve body exposure or direct social interaction.

These findings are consistent with those reported by Policardo et al. (2023), who found that females exhibit significantly higher levels of social physique anxiety than males, particularly in sport and social settings (Policardo et al., 2023, p. 4). The present findings are also supported by Auster-Gussman et al. (2021), who identified social physique anxiety as a mediating variable between body mass index and physical activity participation, with this mediating effect being more pronounced among females (Auster-Gussman et al., 2021, p. 194).

11.3. Presentation and Analysis of the Third Hypothesis

Hypothesis 3: There is a statistically significant correlation between the tendency to avoid physical activity and social physique anxiety among students of the Institutes of Physical Education and Sports.

The hypothesis was examined as follows.

Table 15. Pearson Correlation Coefficient Between the Study Variables

Variables	Pearson's r	p Value	Significance Level
Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Social Physique Anxiety	0.71	<0.001	0.05

Interpretation of Table 15

The results presented in Table 15 indicate a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Social Physique Anxiety. The Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.71, suggesting that higher levels of social physique anxiety are associated with a greater tendency to avoid physical activity among the students.

11.3.1. Discussion of the Third Hypothesis

The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Social Physique Anxiety, indicating that concerns

about how one's physique is evaluated by others constitute an important psychological factor influencing sport-related behavior These findings are supported by the study of Massoudan et al. (2019) . Students who experience higher levels of social physique anxiety are more likely to avoid situations in which their bodies may be observed, evaluated, or compared with those of others, particularly during group-based physical activities or in environments characterized by frequent social evaluation.

These findings are consistent with those reported by More et al. (2019), who demonstrated that body image dissatisfaction is directly associated with avoidance of physical activity (More et al., 2019, p. 112). Likewise, Lydecker et al. (2014) found that individuals with elevated body image anxiety are more likely to engage in avoidance behaviors and social withdrawal, including avoidance of sport and physical activity (Lydecker et al., 2014, p. 14). Furthermore, the present findings support the theoretical framework proposed by Leigh Hart et al. (1989), who identified social physique anxiety as one of the fundamental dimensions of social anxiety within sport settings.

12. Conclusion

The findings of the present study demonstrate that psychological variables related to body image and the social evaluation of physical appearance play a significant role in shaping sport-related behavior among university students. The results revealed that students enrolled in the Institutes of Physical Education and Sports exhibited a relatively high tendency to avoid physical activity, despite reporting relatively low levels of social physique anxiety. This pattern suggests a degree of psychological adaptation associated with the university sport environment while indicating that certain avoidance behaviors toward physical activity persist.

The study also identified statistically significant gender differences, with female students reporting higher levels of both the tendency to avoid physical activity and social physique anxiety than male students. These findings highlight the influence of social and cultural factors related to body image on the psychological experiences of female students within the university sport context.

Moreover, the results demonstrated a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the tendency to avoid physical activity and social physique anxiety, indicating that increased anxiety regarding others' evaluations of one's physical appearance is associated with a greater likelihood of avoiding physical activity and withdrawing from sport-related situations. Accordingly, social

physique anxiety may be considered an important psychological predictor of avoidance behavior toward physical activity.

These findings underscore the importance of implementing psychological interventions within university sport institutions aimed at promoting a positive body image, strengthening self-confidence, and reducing the adverse psychological consequences associated with social comparison and appearance-based evaluation. Such interventions may ultimately contribute to increasing students' engagement in physical activity and fostering healthier psychological adjustment within the university sport environment.

13. General Conclusion

Psychological issues related to body image and social anxiety have become increasingly important topics in the field of sport psychology, particularly in light of the social and cultural changes that have imposed heightened appearance-related standards and psychological pressures on university students. Within this context, the present study sought to examine the relationship between the Tendency to Avoid Physical Activity and Social Physique Anxiety among students enrolled in the Institutes of Physical Education and Sports.

The findings provide further insight into an important psychological dimension influencing sport participation. Specifically, the results indicate that engagement in physical activity is determined not only by physical abilities and technical competence but also by a range of psychological and social factors associated with body image and individuals' perceptions of their physical appearance. Furthermore, the findings suggest that social physique anxiety constitutes an important factor contributing to avoidance behaviors toward physical activity, particularly among female students. These results highlight the need to place greater emphasis on psychological support within university sport education and training programs.

The significance of the present study lies in its examination of contemporary psychological constructs using recently developed measurement instruments within the Algerian university context. As such, it contributes to the growing body of literature on psychological determinants of physical activity and provides a foundation for future research investigating related variables, including body image, self-esteem, and sport motivation.

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