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Sports and social integration of immigrant students. Creation of a questionnaire for the Greek data

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to create a measurement scale that would be used to explore the effect of sports programs provided by university gyms on the social integration of immigrants enrolled in higher education. Specifically, the aim was to create a questionnaire that could measure the social integration of students within the context of sports programs provided in higher education. The sample consisted of 43 students, of which 23 were male and 20 were female, enrolled in departments of the International University of Greece in Kavala and Serres, whose origin or the origin of their parents (second-generation immigrants) was from other countries. The students were members of the university gyms and their participation was voluntary. Based on the results, this study created a valid and reliable tool for measuring social integration within the context of physical education and sports activities provided in higher education.

Keywords: sport, cultural identity, immigrants, tertiary education, social integration

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the phenomenon of globalization has been strongly observed, which is a historical-social change that leads to an increasingly interconnectedness among the countries of the world. This mutual interdependence appears on multiple levels: economic, technological, cultural, socio-political, institutional (Wikipedia, 2019). This historical phenomenon is based on the perception that the world must be organized as a unified whole (Kyriakidis, 2003). One of the trends that has emerged or significantly strengthened in recent years and is identified with globalization is increased migration (Kostakis, 2018). In fact, historically, whenever a wave of globalization emerged, there was an increase in the movement of labor (Rakkas, 2011).

As a result of the intense movement that was created between different countries as well as social classes, and concerns the cultural dimension of globalization, the structure of society, family, religious groups, and cultural elements have been changed (Vergidis & Prokou, 2005).

One of the characteristics of globalization is that heterogeneity and multiculturalism are emphasized. Historically and sociologically, multiculturalism is directly and indirectly associated with globalization (Rakkas, 2011). According to Lavda (2015), the term multiculturalism usually refers to the coexistence of different cultural entities within the boundaries of a state. The phenomenon refers to significant changes taking place in the structure of society under the influence of the coexistence of population groups that have different traditions, values, and ways of life (Karamanou, 2016). As a descriptive term, it indicates the existence of more culturally heterogeneous human societies or

groups. In this sense, the phenomenon of multiculturalism has occupied people from ancient times. The Histories of Herodotus can be considered as a work that aims not only to record cultures and their customs but also to compare them (Paparrigopoulos, 1999).

The multicultural societies of the past differ from today's as the social-historical factors that influenced those societies have changed (Zamba, 2018). In the contemporary era, the term multiculturalism refers to a series of practical political dilemmas in pluralistic societies (Lavdas, 2015). As the multicultural character of modern societies is constantly reinforced, new unprecedented problems arise. Although population movements and the coexistence of different cultures in the same space are not a modern phenomenon, modern societies are called upon to face challenges focused on the integration of immigrants into the local community to ensure their diversity and uniqueness (Zamba, 2018).

In the last few decades, there has been a surge in immigration both in Greece and in the European Union in general. It is reasonable to question to what extent immigrants can harmoniously integrate into the host countries, which are transforming in terms of their demographic composition and institutional structures. The escalation of the immigration wave towards Greece has created new realities, which among other things tend to change the image of tolerance that Greeks had for themselves when Greece was a country of emigration and not immigration (Karydis, 1996).

The long-term consequences of immigration flows are mainly determined by the process of integrating second-generation immigrants. Many of the children of immigrants attend Greek schools and universities and enter the job market. Their integration, both educationally and occupationally, is one of the most complex socio-economic problems in Greek society. Evaluating a country's immigration policy as well as the successful integration of immigrants into society appears to be directly related to the successful or unsuccessful education of foreign students in school (Mousourou, 2006).

As Taylor (1993) states, the problems of multiculturalism mainly arise in education, as the new generations are educated through the educational system, culture and the way of life of a society are cultivated. Especially in Greece, in recent decades, it has been experiencing the consequences of developments, with the large waves of migration that it has been receiving for years. While at the end of the 19th century it was a traditional country of immigration, today it has been transformed into a transit country mainly for people from the Middle East and Africa. A decade ago, the immigrants entering the Greek territory were mainly from the Balkan countries, with more than half coming from neighboring Albania, while the second largest group of immigrants came from the countries of former socialism (Aspridis & Petrelli, 2011). In recent years, Syria has been the first country of origin of refugees, followed by Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Somalia due to the conflicts in these regions (Crawley, 2016). However, is our country sufficiently prepared to make radical changes at all levels of education to address the various problems faced by "minority" students?

In the literature of sports psychology, the idea that positive youth development can be achieved through sports is often mentioned (Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin, 2005). Sports can contribute to positive youth development. Morela (2016) states in her work that many studies identify socially desirable outcomes such as promoting socialization and cooperation (Wuest & Lombardo, 1994), positive peer relationships (Evans & Roberts, 1987), empathy, responsibility, and citizenship (Eley & Kirk, 2002; Cote,

2002), which are due to individuals' participation in sports. Additionally, a positive connection is mentioned between young people's participation in sports and adults' participation in community activities, as young athletes gain valuable social skills, such as emotional control, teamwork, and initiative (Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006), elements that contribute to the smoother functioning of the community. Several European countries promote and support the value of sports for the smooth integration of minority groups into host societies (Sagatun, Kolle, Anderssen, Thoresen & Sogaard, 2008).

METHOD

Sample

The sample of this study consisted of students who were studying at the International University of Greece in Kavala and Serres, whose origin or parents' origin (second-generation immigrants) was from other countries and participated in sports programs provided by the university gymnasiums. The participants voluntarily answered the questions asked of them.

Measurement Instruments

Sport and Cultural Identity Scale

The questionnaire was created by Allen et al in 2010 and examines two dimensions of cultural identity: assimilation (10 questions) (e.g., Through sports, I have socialized with people from different cultures on campus) and cultural preservation (10 questions) (e.g., I usually participate in sports that are traditionally popular in my country). The responses are given on a 4-point scale from 1=completely untrue, 2=slightly untrue, 3=slightly true, 4=completely true, and I don't know=0.

The validity and reliability of the specific questionnaire are validated in the study by Allen et al (2010), but for a different sampling framework.

After the translation of the "Sport and Cultural Identity Scale" questionnaire by Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn (2010) into the Greek language and the reopening of university gyms according to the decision 119847/GD6/23.9.2021 of the joint ministerial decision, the questionnaire was sent to members of the university gyms of the International University of Greece in Kavala and Serres for a pilot study.

The translation was checked using the Back-to-back method. This is a translation quality control method that includes three steps: a) translation of the questionnaire into the original language, b) comparison of the new translation with the original text, and c) checking for any significant differences between the two. The aim was to confirm that the translation of the questionnaire was accurate. It is an additional tool for accuracy control that strengthens the process of translating the questionnaire.

The research was conducted during the period of October-December 2021, and the questionnaires were distributed in person to the students who participated in the programs of the sports centers of the University Cities of Kavala-Serres during this period.

43 students participated voluntarily in the research (23 boys and 20 girls), with the majority belonging to the age group of 21-24 years (55.8%). 9.3% of respondents were over 30 years old, while 18.6% were aged 18-20 and 16.3% were between 25 and 30 years old. On average, the students were in their 4th year of study (Mean=4.2, SD=1.47).

The respondents completed the questionnaire, which, in addition to the first part consisting of basic demographic information and information related to sports and their participation in activities, included the following sections: Questions about Cultural Identity and questions about the Sport and Cultural Identity Scale.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, the statistical program SPSS-20.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used, while the level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Descriptive statistics were used to determine the profile of the research sample, while factor analysis and reliability analysis were conducted to determine the validity of the conceptual construction of the translated questionnaire.

FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics

Initially, in order to determine the profile of the sample of the pilot study, some descriptive statistical data are presented which refer to the preferences of the surveyed male and female students regarding sports. Regarding their first preference in sports, 18.6% stated that they prefer "Volleyball", while the same percentage of respondents answered "Greek Traditional Dances". 16.3% stated "Football" as their first choice and 14% "Basketball". As for the second preference in sports, the same percentage (18.6%) stated both "Volleyball" and "Greek Traditional Dances" as well as "classic sports". For the third preferred sport, we have 14% stating "Greek Traditional Dances" and "Table Tennis", and 11.6% "classic sports" and "Volleyball". The vast majority of respondents (74.4%) stated that they do not actively participate in sports competitions, but only engage in sports as a hobby.

As for the time dedicated by the respondents to sports, they stated that they participate on average 10 times a month (Mean=10.046, SD=7.60), while they train on average 3.86 times a week (Mean=3.86, SD=3.66), or as they stated, 4.76 hours per week (Mean=4.767, SD=3.79).

Validity and Reliability Analysis

Next, in order to determine the validity of the conceptual construction of the translated questionnaire, a factor analysis and reliability analysis were conducted within the scope of the research. In order to determine the optimal number of factors, Parallel Analysis (Horn's Parallel Analysis) was initially performed. This particular analysis is used to determine the optimal number of factors that should be retained or extracted in an exploratory factor analysis (Dinno, 2009). The results of the Parallel Analysis are presented in Table 1 and the following Figure 1.

Table 1: Results of Parallel Analysis (Horn's Parallel Analysis)

Raw Data Eigenvalues, & Mean & Percentile Random Data Eigenvalues			
Root	Raw Data	Means	Prentyle
1,000000	8,108855	3,252284	3,713805
2,000000	4,557316	2,735958	3,033392
3,000000	2,222324	2,371103	2,606621

4,000000	1,501293	2,063094	2,288755
5,000000	,939860	1,793492	1,981959
6,000000	,759480	1,566676	1,742902
7,000000	,725693	1,353604	1,508062
8,000000	,489027	1,168604	1,320678
9,000000	,446328	,994086	1,147178
10,000000	,328530	,837356	,968294
11,000000	,276483	,700951	,822684
12,000000	,224574	,577487	,685975
13,000000	,191008	,462412	,559937
14,000000	,110236	,359822	,454299
15,000000	,064377	,272969	,354570
16,000000	,040512	,198937	,270369
17,000000	,010147	,135347	,191106
18,000000	,003148	,084462	,129938
19,000000	,000811	,046646	,079677
20,000000	,000000	,019947	,043293
21,000000	,000000	,004764	,014138

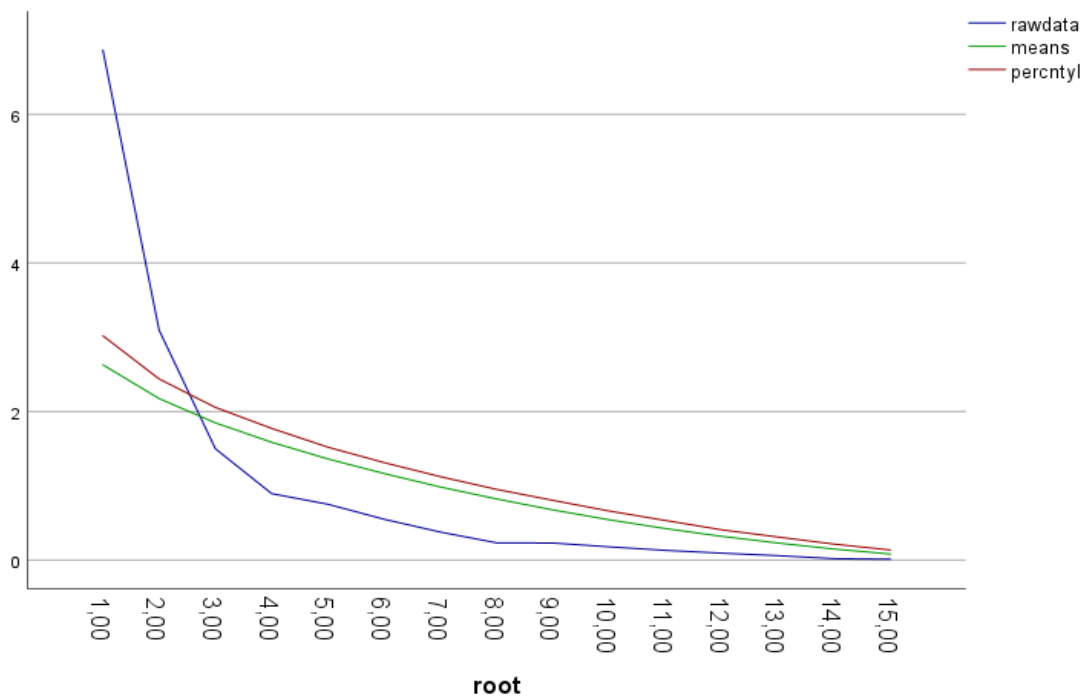


Figure 1. Graphical determination of the optimal number of factors in a factor analysis.

As shown in Table 1, parallel analysis suggests four factors, as this is the number of questions that have a percentage (Prcentyle column) above 2. Alternatively, the corresponding value in the Row Data column is above unity. Similarly, from Figure 1, there are four different slopes of the dashed line corresponding to the row data and located below the other two curves.

Based on the aforementioned parallel analysis, factor analysis was performed on all the questionnaire items in the first phase. The desired number of extracted factors was determined to be four. The Anti-Image analysis showed that question 4 (4: I usually participate in sports that are traditionally popular in my country) presented a very low Anti-Image index ($0.420 < 0.5$) and was excluded from the analysis. Subsequently, factor analysis was carried out without this specific question, and the results showed that questions 5 and 6 had low loadings (< 0.4) (5: My sport gives me opportunities to socialize with people from different cultures and 6: My sport allows me to gain acceptance in my new environment) and were excluded from the analysis. The final factor analysis was performed with the final set of 21 questions. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Factor Name	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
Socializing with people of the same cultural identity	Q1	0.531	0.875
	Q7	0.895	
	Q10	0.661	
	Q13	0.759	
	Q17	0.679	
	Q19	0.726	
	Q23	0.693	
Developing relationships with individuals of different cultural identities	Q2	0.604	0.910
	Q3	0.624	
	Q14	0.608	
	Q18	0.597	
	Q20	0.804	
	Q21	0.634	
	Q22	0.736	
	Q24	0.790	
Development of friendly/social relationships	Q11	0.818	0.855
	Q12	0.723	
	Q15	0.797	
	Q16	0.662	
	Q8	0.593	0.748

Knowledge of a new environment	Q9	0.829	
KMO=0.772, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $X^2=391,3$ ($p<0.001$) Total Variance Explained: 69.888%			

After extracting the factors, an internal consistency reliability analysis was performed. For this reason, the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated for each of the groups created by the factor analysis. Table 2 shows that all the extracted factors have high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha >0.7).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to create a valid and reliable measurement tool that can evaluate social integration in the Greek context, within the framework of Physical Education and Sports, in Tertiary Education.

This research analyzed the validity and reliability of a questionnaire addressed to students of Greek universities, whose origin or their parents' origin (second-generation immigrants) is from other countries and participated in sports programs provided by their university gyms. The results of the exploratory factor analysis show that the "Sports and Cultural Identity Scale" questionnaire is divided into four factors which are: 1) Association with people of the same cultural identity, 2) Developing relationships with people of different cultural identities, 3) Developing friendly-social relationships, 4) Knowledge of a new environment. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis confirm that the hypothetical model of the four factors is consistent with the actual data, with a confidence interval of 95%. These findings are in agreement with the initial hypothesis of the research by Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn (2010). The internal consistency reliability analysis shows that we have a reliable measurement tool with Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient >0.7. Overall, the questionnaire has the construct validity to be considered a reliable and valid tool for measuring the social integration of students.

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