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AN INVESTIGATION ON THE PARTICIPATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF LEISURE TIME*

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine how university students spend their free time and, accordingly, to examine their perceptions about social activities they do in their free time. The present study is important since it tries to reveal the current status of social facilities in universities. The universe of the study consisted of students studying at a state university. The sample comprised of 318 (167 male, 151 female) students studying at various departments at the university and participating in different social activities offered by Directorate of Health, Culture and Sports. Leisure Meanings Inventory was used to collect the data. The data did not show normal distribution; therefore, Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H tests were utilized. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found .92. The results showed statistically significant differences in some variables such as gender, department, age and social activity branch. According to the results, it could be said that most of the students enjoyed participating in social activities. It was observed that undergraduate students participated in social and cultural activities more than graduate students. Students participating in the activities stated that they spend their free time efficiently. Providing more opportunities and facilities for students would be more useful to spend their leisure time efficiently and effectively.

Keywords: Universities, sports, leisure time, recreation

ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN SOSYAL FAALİYETLERE KATILIMI VE SERBEST ZAMAN ALGILARININ İNCELENMESİ

ÖZET

Bu araştırmanın amacı, üniversitelerde okuyan gençlerin serbest zamanlarını nasıl geçirdiklerini tespit etmek ve buna bağlı olarak serbest zamanlarında yaptıkları sosyal faaliyetlerle ilgili algılarını incelemektir. Araştırma üniversitelerdeki sosyal imkanların ve tesislerin mevcut durumunun ortaya konması açısından önem arz etmektedir. Araştırmanın evrenini 2015-2016 yılında Gaziantep Üniversitesinde okuyan öğrenciler oluşturmaktadır. Örneklemi ise Gaziantep Üniversitesi Kültür Müdürlüğüne gelen çeşitli bölümlerde okuyan 318 (167 erkek, 151 kadın) öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada Esteve, Martin ve Lopez (1999) tarafından geliştirilen ve Gürbüz, Özdemir ve Karaküçük (2007) tarafından Türkçe'ye uyarlanan serbest zaman anlamı ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Araştırma verileri normal dağılım göstermediği için iki grup durumunda Mann-Whitney U testi, ikiden fazla grup durumunda ise Kruskal-Wallis H testi kullanılmıştır. Cronbach Alpha iç tutarlılık katsayısı .92 olarak bulunmuştur. Sonuçta cinsiyet, bölüm, yaş ve katıldığı sosyal faaliyet dalına göre istatistiksel olarak anlamlı farklara rastlanmıştır ($p < 0.05$). Sonuçlara göre öğrencilerin çoğunun sosyal faaliyetlere katılmaktan memnun olduğu söylenebilir. Lisans mezunları sosyal ve kültürel faaliyetlere daha çok katılım göstermiştir. Etkinliklere katılan öğrenciler serbest zamanlarını verimli olarak değerlendirmektedir. Öğrenciler için daha fazla tesis ve imkânın yaratılması serbest zamanların değerlendirilmesinde daha faydalı olacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Üniversite, Spor, Serbest zaman, Rekreasyon

1. INTRODUCTION

Some of the problems observed in society, especially among young, can be regarded as threats for families, educators and countries and they negatively affect the quality of life. At this point, recreation programs should be considered as an important alternative approach to prevent all these problems and increase the quality of life within the concept of leisure time (Çelebi, Özbey & Güzel, 2012). Since

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leisure time is a subjective concept, its definition may differ according to the purpose (Hall & Page, 1999). It is defined as the time that remains after work, sleep and other necessities, and the activities are done at this time are called leisure time activities (Roberts, 2006).

Huang and Carleton (2003) claim that those who participate in leisure activities can have strong-willed, character-wise and strong personalities. Individuals' perception of leisure time significantly and positively affects their participation in leisure time activities and their life satisfaction levels improved by these activities. Lloyd and Auld (2002) also accentuate that the pleasure one gets from leisure time activities might affect one's life satisfaction rather than just participating in these activities. Individuals tend to seek self-satisfied and peaceful environments, and to be far from stressful and unhappy situations. The basic features of human beings are learning, recalling, thinking, wanting and being in need. When they are hungry or thirsty, they take action to meet their needs; when they meet these needs, they need to be successful and accepted by others, and they try to achieve these goals (Arkonaç, 2005). In order to meet this feeling of success and their life satisfaction, they try to do something. Accordingly, their leisure time activities will positively affect their perceived pleasure from free time and improve their life satisfaction levels (Huang & Carleton, 2003). According to Gürer and Caymaz (2018), participating in outdoor sports in leisure times is perceived as an activity that gives individuals a sense of freedom and happiness. Moreover, these sports give individuals chances to socialize, plan activities according to their own levels, use their free times in the most efficient way and even these sports provide them with opportunities to establish business relations.

Voluntarily participated in outdoor activities promote teaching/learning, problem-solving and reasoning skills, and also philosophical, ethical and aesthetic development (Hayashi & Ewert, 2006). It can be said that university years, during early adolescence, are the most important process in which the important forms of behaviors are shaped. During this period, participating in recreational activities can help to raise individuals with strong-willed, character-wise and strong personalities (Ağaoğlu & Eker, 2006).

The vast majority of university students do not know how to spend their free time or spend their time in passive activities such as reading newspaper, magazine, wandering around or talking with their friends without any purpose (Kiper, 2009). In their study, Yaşartürk, Akyüz and Karataş (2017) revealed that while the boredom levels of university students participating in recreational activities decreasing and their life satisfaction levels increase.

In the light of the above-mentioned information, the present study aims at determining the activities that university students participate in their leisure time and examining their perceptions on the activities they took part in.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

The current study applied descriptive research design and the population were the students at a state university in Turkey. The sample comprised a total of 318 (167 male, 151 female) students studying at various departments at the university and participating in different social activities offered by Directorate of Health, Culture and Sports. Their ages ranged from 17 to 32. After having been informed about the aim of the study in detail and that their names would be kept anonymous, the participants were asked to read and sign a consent letter to participate.

2.2. Data Collection Tool

Leisure Meanings Inventory was used to collect the data for investigating students' leisure time activity participation and perceptions. The inventory was developed by Esteve, Martin and Lopez (1999), and translated into Turkish by Gürbüz, Özdemir and Karaküçük (2007). It has 35 items with a 6-point-Likert scale and 8 sub-categories. The subcategories are perceived freedom (5 items), relation to work (5 items), social interaction (5 items), discretionary time availability (5 items), active-passive participation (3 items), goal-orientation (4 items), perceived competence (5 items) and intrinsic motivation (4 items). Total Alpha reliability of the scale was found .92. Alpha coefficients for each subcategory were .67 for work relation, .74 for social interaction, .54 for active-passive participation, .68 for perceived freedom, .67 for discretionary time availability, .72 for goal-orientation and .69 for intrinsic motivation.

2.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS 22.0 statistical software program and interpreted. After checking the normality and homogeneity of the distribution, it was found that data was not normally distributed or not homogeneous, thus non-parametric analyses were utilized. To analyze the relations between the data and demographic variables, the Mann-Whitney U test for two groups and the Kruskal-Wallis H test for more than two groups were employed. Descriptive statistics such as arithmetic mean frequency and percentages were also operated.

3. FINDINGS

Table 1: The Distribution of Leisure Meanings Inventory Scores According to Gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	P
perceived freedom	M	167	153,34	25607,00	11579	-1,268	,205
	F	151	166,32	25114,00			
relation to work	M	167	145,07	24227,50	10199,5	-2,961	,003*
	F	151	175,45	26493,50			
social interaction	M	167	156,83	26191,00	12163	-,547	,585
	F	151	162,45	24530,00			
discretionary time availability	M	167	153,12	25571,00	11543	-1,308	,191
	F	151	166,56	25150,00			
active-passive participation	M	167	157,23	26257,00	12229	-,466	,641
	F	151	162,01	24464,00			
goal-orientation	M	167	159,02	26557,00	12529	-,098	,922
	F	151	160,03	24164,00			
perceived competence	M	167	161,78	27017,00	12228	-,468	,640
	F	151	156,98	23704,00			
intrinsic motivation	M	167	145,60	24315,50	10287	-2,855	,004*
	F	151	174,87	26405,50			

* $p < 0,05$

As can be seen in Table 1 clearly, in terms of gender, statistically significant differences were found related to work relation and intrinsic motivation subcategories. The results revealed that female participants actively join these leisure time activities to do something different from their daily work routines. It can also be concluded that females do these types of activities for the sake of just having pleasure.

Table 2: The Distribution of Leisure Meanings Inventory Scores According to Degrees

	Degree	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	P
perceived freedom	Associate's	128	151,54	19396,50	11140,5	-1,278	,201
	Bachelor's	190	164,87	31324,50			
relation to work	Associate's	128	148,90	19059,50	10803,5	-1,698	,090
	Bachelor's	190	166,64	31661,50			
social interaction	Associate's	128	147,17	18838,00	10582	-1,972	,049*
	Bachelor's	190	167,81	31883,00			
discretionary time availability	Associate's	128	157,68	20182,50	11926,5	-,292	,770
	Bachelor's	190	160,73	30538,50			
active-passive participation	Associate's	128	140,27	17955,00	9699	-3,075	,002*
	Bachelor's	190	172,45	32766,00			
goal-orientation	Associate's	128	146,59	18763,00	10507	-2,074	,038*
	Bachelor's	190	168,20	31958,00			
perceived competence	Associate's	128	139,98	17918,00	9662	-3,130	,002*
	Bachelor's	190	172,65	32803,00			
intrinsic motivation	Associate's	128	162,00	20736,00	11840	-,401	,689
	Bachelor's	190	157,82	29985,00			

* $p < 0,05$

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of leisure meanings inventory scores according to students' degrees. Statistically significant results were found in four sub-dimensions of the inventory: social interaction, active-passive participation, goal orientation, and perceived competence. It was observed that bachelor's degree students participated in the activities more, and all statistically significant results were in favor of these students. It could be claimed that bachelor's degree students are those who enjoy more in

developing their skills and preparing for events. They are also more active and excited, and try to communicate with others more than associate's degree students.

Table 3: The Distribution of Leisure Meanings Inventory Scores According to Age Ranges

	Age	N	Mean Rank	SD	X ²	p	Difference
perceived freedom	17-19						
	20-22	57	139,43				
	23-25	106	155,99				
	26-28	119	170,68	4	8,491	,075	
	29 and above	28	180,23				
	8	110,19					
relation to work	17-19						
	20-22	57	112,46				
	23-25	106	169,99				1-2
	26-28	119	167,62	4	18,689	,001*	1-3
	29 and above	28	177,88				1-4
	8	170,56					
social interaction	17-19						
	20-22	57	153,56				
	23-25	106	182,81				
	26-28	119	148,89	4	11,266	,024*	2-3
	29 and above	28	136,98				
	8	129,62					
discretionary time availability	17-19						
	20-22	57	143,33				
	23-25	106	158,44				
	26-28	119	164,08	4	8,648	,071	
	29 and above	28	192,66				
	8	104,62					
active-passive participation	17-19						
	20-22	57	123,59				
	23-25	106	179,34				
	26-28	119	159,44	4	16,124	,003*	1-2
	29 and above	28	170,64				
	8	114,38					
goal-orientation	17-19						
	20-22	57	110,39				
	23-25	106	179,01				
	26-28	119	169,21	4	23,876	,000*	1-2
	29 and above	28	153,48				1-3
	8	127,38					
perceived competence	17-19						
	20-22	57	135,89				
	23-25	106	167,95				
	26-28	119	166,36	4	6,456	,168	
	29 and above	28	155,70				
	8	127,06					
intrinsic motivation	17-19						
	20-22	57	115,17				
	23-25	106	162,01				
	26-28	119	176,53	4	17,882	,001*	1-2
	29 and above	28	167,64				1-4
	8	160,31					

** p< 0,01 p< 0,05 Group 1:17-19 ages Group 2: 20-22 ages Group 3: 23-25 ages Group 4: 26-28 ages Group 5: 29 and above

Table 3 presents the scores according to the participants' ages and the analysis revealed statistically significant differences in relation to work, social interaction, active-passive participation, goal-orientation and intrinsic motivation sub-dimensions. It was observed that the students between 20 and 22 wanted to communicate with others more, to feel excited and to get more pleasure while getting ready for activities. It was also found that 26 and 28-year-olds participated in an activity just because they liked that activity and want to enjoy themselves.

Table 4: The Distribution of Leisure Meanings Inventory Scores According to The Social Activity

	Group	N	Mean Rank	SD	X ²	p	difference
perceived freedom	Aviation	64	151,64	6	4,977	,547	
	Ataturkist ideology Sign	45	166,72				
	language	66	155,93				
	Environment	37	150,72				
	Music	32	177,27				
	Mountaineering/outdoor sports	43	176,07				
	Dance	31	142,00				
relation to work	Aviation	64	158,27	6	25,012	,000*	2-7
	Ataturkist ideology Sign	45	192,99				
	language	66	153,61				
	Environment	37	141,08				
	Music	32	193,89				
	Mountaineering/outdoor sports	43	167,15				
	Dance	31	101,84				
social interaction	Aviation	64	144,12	6	13,360	,038*	5-7
	Ataturkist ideology Sign	45	172,39				
	language	66	158,30				
	Environment	37	180,97				
	Music	32	134,45				
	Mountaineering/outdoor sports	43	144,33				
	Dance	31	196,37				
discretionary time availability	Aviation	64	148,57	6	5,250	,512	
	Ataturkist ideology Sign	45	167,46				
	language	66	144,73				
	Environment	37	161,53				
	Music	32	177,09				
	Mountaineering/outdoor sports	43	173,86				
	Dance	31	161,47				
active-passive participation	Aviation	64	158,33	6	14,785	,022*	2-5
	Ataturkist ideology Sign	45	188,90				
	language	66	141,79				
	Environment	37	163,45				
	Music	32	120,44				
	Mountaineering/outdoor sports	43	171,10				
	Dance	31	176,47				
goal-orientation	Aviation	64	155,11	6	4,681	,585	
	Ataturkist ideology Sign	45	174,21				
	language	66	158,48				
	Environment	37	144,85				
	Music	32	180,12				
	Mountaineering/outdoor sports	43	159,72				
	Dance	31	145,26				
perceived competence	Aviation	64	138,96	6	13,141	,041*	1-2
	Ataturkist ideology Sign	45	194,68				
	language	66	151,44				
	Environment	37	169,76				
	Music	32	140,73				
	Mountaineering/outdoor sports	43	159,69				
	Dance	31	174,87				
intrinsic motivation	Aviation	64	169,64	6	14,922	,021*	4-6
	Ataturkist ideology Sign	45	169,61				
	language	66	137,48				
	Environment	37	128,69				
	Music	32	170,39				
	Mountaineering/outdoor sports	43	190,43				
	Dance	31	153,39				

* p< 0,05 Group 1: Aviation Group 2: Ataturkist ideology Group 3: Sign language Group 4: Environment Group 5: Music Group 6: Mountaineering/outdoor sports Group 7: Dance

As can be seen in Table 4, the results were statistically significant in the sub-dimensions of a working relationship, social interaction, perceived competence, active-passive participation and intrinsic motivation. It was observed that members of the music community participate in the activities to get rid of the monotony of daily life, members of the dance community participate in order to meet and communicate with others, and members of the Atatürkist Ideology community participate in activities

to get rid of the monotony of daily life and to do what they want; when they want and to be active in the life in general. It was also found that those who participate in mountaineering and outdoor sports take part because they enjoy doing something they love.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to find out how university students spend their leisure time and investigate their perceptions about social activities they participate in their free time. In our study, statistically significant differences were found in terms of gender, age, degree and the community they attended ($p < 0.05$).

According to a research by Ajans Press (2017), a media monitoring center, Turkey ranks the first in the world with 330 minutes per day watching TV ratio (www.milliyet.com), and this finding shows that people in Turkey spend most of their free time by watching TV in a monotonous and unhealthy way. This unhealthy life can further affect people who do not engage in sports or recreational activities. It is important for the service providers of recreational activities to determine the personality traits of their members and develop their programs in order to keep the interest of the consumers, retain current customers and attract the attention of new customers (Aydın, Çimen, Serdar & Güngörmüş, 2018). Considering that students spend most of their time in environments such as dormitories and student houses, the importance of participating in recreational activities at universities becomes apparent. These findings also give clues about the outcomes of leisure time activities.

The results of the present study were in line with those of Deci (1971) and Esteve et al. (1999). We could say that female student participate leisure time activities to do different things other than daily tasks (Esteve et al., 1999) and to motivate themselves based on their motives (intrinsic motivation) (Deci, 1971), sense of satisfaction and freedom (Esteve et al., 1999). White and Duda (1994), in their study on athletes, stated that men are more competitive due to the gender factor. This situation may also be related to the greater participation of male students in the activities. Similarly, in our study, it was found that males participated more. In their study, Demir and Demir (2006) included gender among the factors that affect participation in leisure activities and concluded that gender had an effect, even at a minimal level, on participating in leisure activities. Gürer and Yıldız (2015) stated in their research that men participate more in rock climbing, which is one of the extreme sports. It is known that men participate more in many studies (Moccia, 2000). In their study measuring university students' anxiety levels, Gürer, Tiryaki and Güzel (2014) stated that men participated more and they were more anxious, maybe it is because male students participate recreative activities more. In another study by Moccia (2000) stated that gender plays an important role in deciding on and participating in leisure activities. In the light of these explanations, it can be said that gender is an important factor in participating in leisure time activities.

Bachelor's degree students participate in activities more than associate's degree students. These students had statistically significant differences in the sub-dimensions of social interaction, active and passive participation, goal orientation and perceived competence. Frederick and Ryan (1993) compared those who do group sports with those who do individual sports and concluded that those who participate in group sports enjoy sports more. That's why we can say that bachelor's degree students participate in leisure activities more just because most of the students at universities are bachelor's degree students. According to the results of our study, bachelor's degree students are the ones who participate more in the activities for the purpose of improving their skills and get more pleasure while getting ready for the activities. Due to the high course load of students, it comes to mind that they are interested in recreational activities more. Furthermore, bachelor's degree students are more active and excited, and also willing to communicate with others. Studies revealed that those who do sports frequently participate more in physical activities (Kilpatrick, Hebert, & Bartholomew, 2005). Perhaps it could be the reason that bachelor's degree students have a profile of students who do more sports.

When it comes to age variable, it was found that students in the 20-22 age group participated in activities to communicate, feel excited and have more pleasure while doing activities; whereas, 26- 28-year-olds participated in the communities in the university to enjoy an activity they liked.

According to Gürer, Bektaş and Kural (2018), the increase in age affects psychological performance positively, but younger students participate in leisure time activities more. The fact that older students are the ones who work to earn their living comes to mind as a different factor. Perhaps this situation

affects students' preferences to participate in activities. Kunz and Graham (1996) concluded that people in the younger age group tend to participate in more physical and sportive activities than older people. Demir and Demir (2006) concluded that the age factor has a slight effect on leisure time activities, and our findings support the findings of these studies.

According to the community variable, it was observed that university students prefer social and adventure university clubs. Results revealed statistically significant correlations with subdimensions and communities as related to work and Atatürkist Ideology; social interaction and dance; active-passive participation and Atatürkist Ideology; perceived competence and Atatürkist Ideology, and intrinsic motivation and mountaineering and outdoor sports. Frederick and Ryan (1993) stated that the sports field of interest has a positive effect on the motivation to participate. Having too many alternatives within communities proposed by universities might be affecting the distribution. It was observed that communities having an adventure, movement and exciting sports activities were more active. It was seen that the Atatürkist Ideology Club and Music group preferred these activities because they wanted to do something different from daily tasks. On the contrary, it was also observed that the ones who participate in dance club showed less preference to do something other than daily tasks. However, it was determined that the ones who participate in the dance community had the aim of meeting new people and communicating with them at a high level. It was also found that those who participate in the Atatürkist Ideology Community participate in this activity just because they want. As a different result, it was concluded that those who joined the Mountaineering and Outdoor Sports community prefer this community to enjoy and take part in an activity they like. It is important for young people to do nature sports in terms of having social interaction. Spending leisure time by doing nature sports provides significant gains for individuals (Gürer & Caymaz, 2018). Besides, as the perceived satisfaction level by university students in recreational activities increases, life satisfaction also increases simultaneously, and it can be said that they spend more productive time in such activities (Yaşartürk et al., 2017). Based on these results, it can be said that students want to choose the type of activity they want more.

As a result, it can be said that gender is a determining feature in spending leisure time by taking part in activities and the age range of 20-25 is more active in spending leisure time effectively and efficiently. Bachelor's degree students participate in student communities more in their leisure time. Students preferred to participate more in communities that have adventurous and social roles. Socializing, participating in an activity they desire, and expanding their circle of friends can be seen as the gains of students from social activities. Hence, the participation of students in social activities at universities provides positive gains for them. Thus, leisure activities should be supported more by university administrations. Elective courses related to social, cultural and adventure activities can be offered in universities. Increasing leisure time activities can appeal to students of all ages, so studies could be conducted to guide associate's degree students to join leisure time activities.

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