



Constraints and perceived freedom levels in the leisure of university students

Mehmet Demirel¹
Duygu Harmandar Demirel²
Emrah Serdar³

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the leisure constraints and level of perceived freedom of university students according to different variables. 250 university students in total, 174 (69%) of whom are males and 78 (31%) of whom are females selected by random sampling have voluntarily attended the research study. A survey model has been used in the study. The sample of the study consists of students studying at Istanbul University's Faculty of Sports Sciences. In order to identify the leisure obstacles of the participants, the *Obstacles of Leisure Scale*, which was developed by Alexandris and Carroll (1997) and adopted into Turkish by Karaküçük and Gürbüz (2007); and in order to identify the level of perceived freedom of the participants, the *Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale*, which was developed by Witt and Ellis (1985) and adopted into Turkish by Yerlisu Lapa and Ağyar (2011), were used along with a personal information form prepared by the researcher as a data collection tool in the research. Percent (%) and frequency methods have been utilized to identify the distribution of the personal information of the participants and the Shapiro-Wilks normality test has been applied to identify whether data had normal distribution. Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests have been applied to determine the significant differences after it was determined that the data were suitable to non-parametric test conditions. According to the gender variable, no significant difference (except Individual Psychology) has been identified in the sub-dimensions of the obstacles of the leisure scale and perceived freedom in leisure scale ($p>0.05$). While there is a significant difference in all sub-dimensions of the perceived freedom in leisure scale ($p<0.05$), no significant difference has been found in the sub-dimensions of the obstacles of the leisure time scale ($p>0.05$) according to age. In conclusion, it has been determined that while there are no differences between the leisure obstacles according to the gender of the participants, the level of perceived freedom increases as the age increases.

Keywords: Leisure; Leisure Constraints; Perceived Freedom in Leisure.

Introduction

Definitions of leisure concepts can differ based on the agents participating in the leisure activities (Howe & Carpenter, 1985; Demirel & Harmandar, 2009). According to the definition of World Leisure and Recreation Association (WLRA), leisure (spare time) refers to a special zone of agents' lives which provides the chance to choose, be creative, experience joy and contentment, allowing the activities to increase personal satisfaction. In more general terms, leisure stands for a period of time which agents can use freely (Broadhurst, 2001). For an individual to participate in recreational activities, s/he should have time which is separate from work and compulsory needs,

¹ Asist Prof. Dumlupınar University, School of Physical Education and Sport, mehmetdemirel78@gmail.com

² Asist Prof. Dumlupınar University, School of Physical Education and Sport, duyguharmandar@gmail.com

³ Research Assistant. Istanbul University, Sports Science Faculty, serdar-emrah@hotmail.com

and in which s/he can use freely. Such times can differ from person to person, and are of subjective meaning (Karaküçük, 2005, Gürbüz & Handerson, 2013, Demirel & Harmandar, 2009). In the century we live in, we can observe that with the rapid increase in scientific and technological innovations, daily conveniences have increased and personal working hours have decreased, which, in turn, has resulted in people having more spare time. In daily life, the boredom and repetitive features of our work and other activities have made leisure activities a critical tool of renewal in our lives. Additionally, a living sector which can present multi-optional services, has been established for recreation. An effective recreation, which is a result of an increase in economic efficiency and relief in working conditions, has also shown positive outcomes. It is commonly stated in the related literature that an increase in positive use of recreation contributes to young people becoming self-realized individuals and to improving their mental health (Özşaker, 2012).

Despite the positive contributions of participation in recreational activities, it is also observed that agents have not participated in such important activities due to various constraints. Here, 'constraint' refers to the obstacles which limit or inhibit agents from participating in recreational activities, or any obstacles agents meet (Karaküçük & Gürbüz, 2007). Such obstacles prevent people from unloading excessive energy and nurturing skills they may possess. In such settings, people constantly feel under pressure and stressed, and their unmet need for renewal and change may result in various problems, especially for young people (Karaküçük, 2005).

There have been various studies which claim active participation in recreational activities have positive emotional outcomes in agents. One of these positive emotional outcomes is the concept of freedom. 'Perceived freedom' refers to cognitive and motivational patterns related to agents' perceptions of their preferred leisure activities (Agyar, 2013). It is presupposed that perceived freedom establishes a causal relationship between actor and action, and that the actor himself is the basis of his actions. Perceived freedom in leisure reflects actors' evaluations towards their skills to participate in recreational activities and thus is affected by life events. Individuals who believe that they would have more freedom for recreational activities, tend to perform at a higher competency, focus of control, internal motivation and acting emotions (Lapa & Ağyar, 2012).

Considering the importance of determining the leisure constraints and related factors of university students' normal and academic lives towards participating in recreational activities and their attitudes towards spare time activities, this study aims to examine the relationship between leisure constraints and perceived freedom in the leisure activities of university students in terms of various variables.

Method

Study Sample

The sample of this study consists of 252 university students (174 males and 78 females) attending Istanbul University with an average age of 21.80 ± 2.62 .

Data Collection Instrument

The form used in the study as a data collection instrument consists of three parts. The first part is the "Personal Information Form" which aims to determine students' gender, age, income and weekly leisure time. The second part, which aims to measure the perceived competency, control and internal motivation in leisure, is the "Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale" which was developed by Witt and Ellis (1985) and adapted into Turkish by Yerlisu, Lapa and Ağyar (2011). It is a five-point Likert scale with 17 items and two sub-dimensions labelled *Knowledge and Skill* and *Excitement and Joy*. In the scale, the scores range from 1 (Definitely Disagree) to 5 (Definitely Agree). For the third part, the participants were asked to complete the "Leisure Constraints Questionnaire" which was developed by Alexandris and Carroll (1977), and adapted into Turkish by Karaküçük and Gürbüz (2007), and aims to determine participants' perceptions of their leisure constraints. It is a four-point Likert scale with 27 items and six sub-dimensions labelled *Individual Psychology*, *Lack of*

Social Environment and Knowledge, Facilities/Services and Access, Lack of Friends, Lack of Interest and Time. In the questionnaire, the scores range from 1 (Totally Unimportant) to 4 (Very Important).

Data Analysis Process

The data related to personal information was analyzed using frequency and percentage, both of which are descriptive analysis methods. With the aim of testing whether both instruments' sub-dimensions show a normal range, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted, and the results revealed that there was not a normal distribution among the sub-dimensions of both scales ($p < 0.05$). The Mann Whitney U Test was then applied for the data with two variables, and the Kruskal Wallis Test was applied for more than two variables. The significance level was accepted as $\alpha = 0.05$.

Finding

Table 1. The Distribution of the Participants in terms of Gender, Age, Monthly Income and Weekly Leisure

Variables		F	%
Gender	Male	174	69.1
	Female	78	30.9
	Total	252	100
Age	17-20	147	58.3
	21-25	96	38.1
	26 and older	9	3.6
	Total	252	100
Monthly Income	Very Low	22	8.7
	Low	41	16.3
	Medium	149	59.1
	High	35	13.9
	Very High	5	2.0
Total	252	100	
Weekly Leisure Time	1-5 Hours	65	25.8
	6-10 Hours	68	27.0
	11-15 Hours	56	22.2
	16 Hours or more	63	25.0
	Total	252	100

According to the statistical findings concerning participants' gender, age, monthly income and weekly leisure time, 69.1% of the participants are male while 30.9% are female. The age of 58.3% of them ranges from 17 to 20, 59.1% of them have a "medium level" of monthly income, and 27% of them have "6-10 hours" weekly for leisure time.

Table 2: The Participants' Perceived Leisure Freedom Levels based on Gender

Sub Dimension	Gender	N	Sequence Value Avg.	Z	p
Knowledge and Skill	Male	174	125.73	-.251	.802
	Female	78	128.22		
Excitement and Joy	Male	174	121.00	-1.792	.073
	Female	78	138.77		

Table 2 presents the Mann-Whitney U Test results conducted to test perceived freedom levels in leisure based on participants' genders. The results indicate no statistically significant difference between the scores of males and females ($p > 0.05$).

Table 3: The Leisure Constraint Levels of Participants based on Gender

Sub-Dimension	Gender	N	Sequence Value Avg.	Z	p
Individual Psychology	Male	174	126.53	-2.273	.023*
	Female	78	126.44		
Lack of Social Environment and Knowledge	Male	174	124.04	-.622	.534
	Female	78	131.99		
Lack of Interest	Male	174	123.28	-.773	.439
	Female	78	133.69		
Lack of Friends	Male	174	123.05	-1.203	.229
	Female	78	134.20		
Facilities/Services/Access	Male	174	126.12	-1.320	.187
	Female	78	127.35		
Time	Male	174	122.69	-1.391	.164
	Female	78	134.99		

Table 3 illustrates the Mann-Whitney U test results which was conducted to determine the leisure constraints based on participants' gender. The results show that among the participants' gender and leisure constraints, there is a significant difference in only the "Individual Psychology" sub-dimension ($p < 0.05$). No statistically significant difference in any other sub-dimensions was found ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4: The Perceived Freedom Levels in Leisure based on Participants' Gender

Sub Dimension	Age	N	Sequence Value Avg.	X ²	p
Knowledge and Skills	17-20	147	113.70	10.918	.004*
	21-25	96	144.31		
	26 and older	9	145.61		
Excitement and Joy	17-20	147	114.58	9.477	.009*
	21-25	96	143.01		
	26 and older	9	145.17		

With the aim of testing the perceived freedom levels in leisure based on participants' gender, the Kruskal Wallis Test was conducted, and the results are shown in Table 4. The test results revealed that there are statistically significant differences in the sub-scales of "Knowledge and Skills" and "Excitement and Joy" ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5: Participants' Leisure Constraint Levels based on Age

Sub-Dimension	Age	N	Sequence Value Avg.	X ²	p
Individual Psychology	17-20	147	129.22	.707	.602
	21-25	96	117.90		
	26 and older	9	173.72		
Lack of Social Environment and Knowledge	17-20	147	133.68	.518	.772
	21-25	96	118.03		
	26 and older	9	99.56		
Lack of Interest	17-20	147	128.82	1.057	.590
	21-25	96	120.47		
	26 and older	9	153.00		
Lack of Friends	17-20	147	129.60	.739	.691
	21-25	96	120.82		
	26 and older	9	136.50		
Facilities/Services/Access	17-20	147	126.78	.184	.912
	21-25	96	125.04		
	26 and older	9	137.61		
Time	17-20	147	124.23	2.651	.266
	21-25	96	125.49		
	26 and older	9	174.28		

Table 5 presents the results of the Kruskal Wallis test which was applied to test the leisure constraints of the participants based on age. There were no statistically significant differences between participants' ages and leisure constraints found ($p > 0.05$).

Table 6: The Relationship between the Sub-Dimensions of the Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale and the Leisure Constraints Questionnaire

Sub Dimensions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Knowledge and Skills	R	1						
	P							
Excitement and Joy	R	.825	1					
	P	0.04**						
Individual Psychology	R	.370	.419	1				
	P	0.04**	0.04**					
Lack of Social Environment and Knowledge	R	.293	.363	.697	1			
	P	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**				
Lack of Interest	R	.311	.395	.675	.726	1		
	P	0.04**	0.04**	0.03**	0.03**			
Lack of Friends	R	.236	.282	.566	.624	.682	1	
	P	0.03**	0.03**	0.03**	0.03**	0.03**		
Facilities/Services/Access	R	.247	.225	.521	.462	.530	.539	1
	P	0.01**	0.01**	0.01**	0.01**	0.01**	0.01**	
Time	R	.200	.255	.485	.502	.598	.585	.553
	P	0.00**	0.00**	0.00**	0.01**	0.03**	0.01**	0.01**

The Spearman correlation test was applied to test whether there would be a relationship between the sub-dimensions of the *Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale* and the *Leisure Constraints Questionnaire* and the results are shown in Table 6. According to the test results, there is a statistically positive and significant relationship between the sub-scales of both instruments ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the study is to examine the leisure constraints and perceived freedom in leisure of university students in terms of different variables. Considering the demographic features of the participants, it was found that 69.1% of the participants were males; 58.3% of them were between the ages of 17 and 20, 59.1% had a medium level of income and 27% of them had leisure time of 6-10 hours weekly. Based on gender, the findings related to the participants' perceived freedom in leisure suggest that there was no significant difference in both the "Knowledge and Skills" and the "Excitement and Joy" sub-dimensions. In a study by Lapa & Ağyar (2012), and Serdar (2016) which aimed to determine the university students' perceived freedom in leisure in terms of their participation in recreational activities, it was also found that gender was not a meaningful factor in determining agents' perceived freedom levels. Also, in another study by Kodaş et al. (2015) concerning the perceived freedom and leisure time satisfaction levels of agents working in the tourism sector, there was found to be no significant differences in the "Knowledge and Skills" sub-dimension. In this sense, it can be inferred that the findings of Kodaş et al. (2015) is not parallel with the current study in terms of the "Knowledge and Skill" sub-dimension. In terms of the age variable, there were found to be significant differences in both sub-dimensions. According to the related findings, as the participants' ages increase, they realize the importance of leisure and they become more aware of the fact that positive recreational activities would contribute to the renewal of agents' lives. Thus, it is thought that the perceived freedom level in leisure also rises. In a review of the participants' thoughts about leisure constraints, there was found to be a significant difference in "Individual Psychology" on the basis of the gender variable ($p < 0.05$), while in other sub-

dimensions no significant differences were found in this sense. In a study of Tolukan (2010) examining university students' recreational constraints, there was found to be a statistically significant difference in the "Lack of Knowledge" sub-dimension, and it was determined that this difference stemmed from the female participants. In another study by Balcı (2003), it was found that females participated in recreational activities less than males. Alexandris and Carroll (1997) who conducted research on university students' participation frequency in recreational sports activities and on the obstacles to participation in such activities, revealed that there was a meaningful relationship between "lack of knowledge" and "agents' motivation level", and perceived constraints. In an overview of the participants' thoughts about leisure constraints based on age, there were no meaningful differences found. In the study of Pala and Dinç (2013) who studied with the leisure constraints of civil servants, there were significant differences found based on age, and especially in the "Time" sub-dimension. Similarly, in another study, Ekinçi et al. (2014) determined significant differences in this sense. On the other hand, Demirel et al. (2013) found no meaningful relationships between age and leisure constraints of university students. On the basis of the Spearman correlation test which was conducted to determine the relationships between the sub-dimensions of the perceived leisure scale and the leisure constraints questionnaire, the study results suggest that there are statistically positive relationships among both scales' sub-dimensions. In conclusion, it was revealed that gender was not a contributing factor in perceived freedom in leisure while age was of significance. In terms of the leisure constraints questionnaire, the gender variable was found to result in meaningful differences in the "Individual Psychology" sub-dimension while there were no significant differences in leisure constraints based on the participants' ages.

References

- Ağyar, E. (2013). Contribution of Preceived Freedom and Leisure Satisfaction to Life Satisfaction in A Sample of Turkish Women, *Social Indicators Research*, 116 (1), 1-15.
- Alexandris, K., Carroll, B. (1997). Demographic Differences in The Perception of Constrains On Recreational Sport Participation: Results from A Study in Greece. *Leisure Studies*, 16, s. 107-125.
- Balcı, V. (2003). Ankara'daki Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Boş Zaman Etkinliklerine Katılımlarının Araştırılması, *Milli Eğitim Dergisi*, 158, s. 172
- Broadhurst, R. (2001). *Managing Environments For Leisure And Recreation* London, GBR: Rotledge, s.3.
- Demirel, M., Dumlu, Y., Gürbüz, B., & Balcı, V. (2013). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Rekreatif Etkinliklere Katılımını Engelleyen Faktörlerin Belirlenmesi, 2. Rekreatif Araştırmaları Kongresi, Aydın, Turkey, 600-607.
- Demirel, M., Harmandar, D. (2009). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Rekreatif Etkinliklere Katılımlarında Engel Oluşturabilecek Faktörlerin Belirlenmesi. *Uluslararası İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi*, Cilt:6, Sayı:1, s. 840.
- Ekinçi, E. N., Kalkavan, A., Üstün D. Ü., & Gündüz, B., (2014). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Sportif ve Sportif Olmayan Rekreatif Etkinliklere Katılımlarına Engel Olabilecek Unsurların Belirlenmesi, *Sportif Bakış: Spor ve Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 1 (1), s.1-13.
- Gürbüz, B., Henderson, K. (2013). Exploring the Meanings of Leisure among Turkish University Students, *Croatian Journal of Education*. 15(4), 927-957.
- Gürbüz, B., Karaküçük, S., "Boş Zaman Engelleri Ölçeği-28: Ölçek Geliştirme, Geçerlik ve Güvenirlik Çalışması", *Gazi Üniversitesi, Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, XII, 1, 2007, s. 3-10.
- Howe., C. Z, Carpenter, G. M. (1985). *Programming Leisure Experiences*, Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey, s.3.
- Karaküçük, S. (2005). *Rekreatif (Boş Zamanları Değerlendirme)*, Gazi Kitabevi, Ankara, s.60.
- Karaküçük, S., Gürbüz, B. (2007). *Rekreatif ve Kent(l)ileşme*. Ankara: Gazi Kitabevi.

- Kodaş, D., Kodaş, B., & Arıca, R. (2015). Yiyecek-İçecek Çalışanlarının Serbest Zaman Tatmin Düzeyleri İle Serbest Zamanda Algılanan Özgürlüklerinin İncelenmesi, 3. Rekreasyon Araştırmaları Kongresi, Eskişehir Anadolu Üniversitesi.
- Lapa, Y. T., Ağyar, E. (2012). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Serbest Zaman Katılımlarına Göre Algılanan Özgürlük, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Spor Bilimleri Dergisi, 23(1), s.24-33.
- Özşaker, M. (2012). Gençlerin Serbest Zaman Aktivitelerine Katılmama Nedenleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma, Selçuk Üniversitesi, Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi, 14 (1), s.126.
- Pala, F., Dinç, S.C. (2013). Kamu Kurumlarında Görev Yapan Personelin Serbest Zaman Etkinliklerine Katılımını Engelleyen Faktörlerin Belirlenmesi, 2. Rekreasyon Araştırmaları Kongresi, Aydın, Turkey, 632-637.
- Serdar, E. (2016). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Katıldıkları Serbest Zaman Etkinliklerinden Tatmin Olma ve Algılanan Özgürlük Düzeylerinin İncelenmesi, Marmara Üniversitesi, Sağlık Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi.
- Tolukan, E. (2010). Özel Yetenekle İlgili Bölümlerde Okuyan Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Rekreasyonel Aktivitelere Katılımlarına Engel Olabilecek Unsurların Belirlenmesi, Niğde Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi.